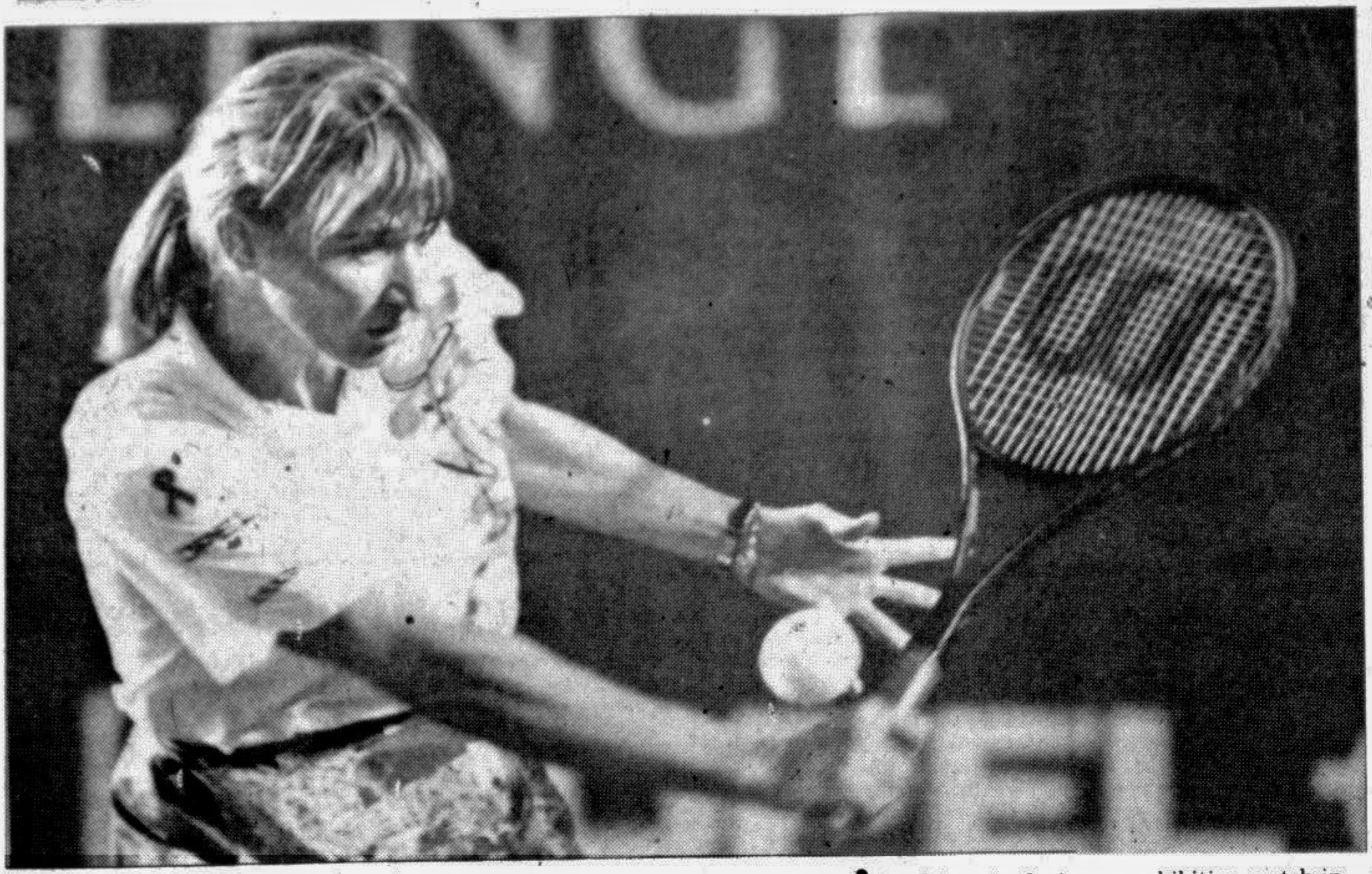


Sport



World number one Steffi Graf of Germany plays a backhand return to Iva Majoli of Croatia during an exhibition match in Hong Kong on Jan 6. Graf won 6-1, 6-1. — AFP photo

Edberg feels great

DOHA, Jan 8: Stefan Edberg boosted his hopes of winning a third Australian Open title when he crushed Henri Leconte in the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open on Friday, reports Reuter.

"I think I am playing well enough to win in Australia," said third-seeded Edberg after his 6-4, 6-2 victory. "I'm playing as well now as I have done for some time."

Goran Ivanisevic, the only other seed to survive to the quarter-final stage, also had a comfortable passage in to the last four.

The fourth-seeded Croatian beat Italy's Stefano Pescosolido 6-4, 6-4 in little over an hour. He will now meet Paul Haarhuis of the Netherlands, a 6-4, 6-2 winner over Russia's Andrei Olhovskiy.

Edberg, who meets Austrian Gilbert Schaller in the semifinals, said he had been playing "pretty well" for the past three months.

Leconte lashed out at the standard of linesmen here after he disputed a series of calls.

"We all know we will have some bad calls. But I have had problems all week both in the singles and doubles," said the Frenchman.

"The linesmen here have to be more positive and not wait before they make a call."

But Leconte admitted Edberg had been just too good for him.

Looking ahead to the Australian Open later this month, he said: "I think Stefan has the game to win another Grand Slam event."

Ivanisevic was also in a critical mood, hitting out at the organisers for making him play a doubles immediately after his match with Pescosolido.

"I have had enough tough matches this week and I wasn't happy about it ... but they don't care."

"If I had played just one match today, I would be fresher to meet Haarhuis tomorrow. He killed me the last time we played in Tokyo but this is a different surface so it should be an interesting match."

Reneberg moves up

HONOLULU, Jan 8: Richey Reneberg held serve the entire way and scored a 6-3, 6-3 victory Wednesday over Doug Flach to advance to the quarter finals of the Hawaii Open, reports AP.

Reneberg, the No 2 seed, will face N. 7 Renzo Furlan, a 6-3, 7-6 winner over fellow Italian Cristiano Caratti. Jimmy Arias and Robbie Weiss advanced with victories and will meet in the quarterfinals.

Davenport in Brisbane final



BRISBANE, Jan 8:

American teenager Lindsay Davenport used a booming forehand to defeat Shuiting Wang of Taiwan Saturday in the semi-final of the US dls 150,000 Australian women's Hardcourt tennis championship, reports AP.

Davenport, the 17-year-old No. 2 seed from Palos Verdes, Calif., eliminated Wang 6-2, 6-4 on a blazing hot centre court, and now will play No. 11 seed Florencia Labat of Argentina in Sunday's final.

Labat advanced direct to the final when top-seeded Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria was forced to concede their semi-

Alma-Ata to bid for 2002 Games

LAUSANNE, Jan 8: Alma-Ata, capital of the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan, will bid for the 2002 Winter Olympics, reports AP.

The International Olympic Committee said in its weekly bulletin Saturday that it had received confirmation of the bid from the National Olympic Committee of Kazakhstan.

Other cities that have announced bids for 2002 are Salt Lake City, Utah; Quebec City, Quebec; and Ostersund, Sweden. Switzerland is among others considering making a bid; as is the Russian resort of Sochi.

The initial deadline for bids is Feb 1. The IOC will select the host city in 1995.

Salt Lake City is considered the strong favourite at this stage.

Tennis needs more fun: Shriver



BRISBANE, Jan 8: Tennis needs to change direction and become more hip if it is to remain popular, former US Open finalist Pam Shriver said Thursday, reports AP.

"My whole feeling is that tennis needs to be more conscious that it is entertainment," Shriver said.

"We are asking people to spend money, to buy a ticket, to sit in the stands to watch something to be entertained."

"Besides the actual tennis going on, there's also quite a lot of dead time."

"You've got the 90-second changeovers, you've got the time between matches and I'd like to see some of these gaps filled with really fun things so that people leave and say: 'That was just so much fun. That was a blast tonight.'

Reneberg moves up

HONOLULU, Jan 8: Richey Reneberg held serve the entire way and scored a 6-3, 6-3 victory Wednesday over Doug Flach to advance to the quarter finals of the Hawaii Open, reports AP.

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final because of dehydration. Maleeva, 19, was briefly hospitalised after her quarterfinal victory on Friday over Australian Rachel McQuillan. She was given fluids intravenously and was resting in her hotel room Saturday.

Davenport, a tall, powerful player who has worked hard on her footwork, has dropped only 15 games in her four matches at the tournament so far.

She was given a surprisingly tough fight late in the match by sixth-seeded Wang, who had a point for 5-5 in the second set before Davenport served out for the match.

The American said she had felt herself wilting in the heat and was determined to win in straight sets.

"I felt good in the beginning, but then I got a little tight," she said. "I didn't want it to go to a third set, no matter what."

"I play well in hot temperatures. It's just lasting that's the problem."

Wang said she was impressed with the improvement in Davenport's game over the last 12 months.

"Lindsay has improved a lot," she said. "Her serve is harder, she plays more consistently and she's moving much better."

The WTA Tour said in a statement that Maleeva was in stable condition and the dehydration should not affect her plans to compete in the Australian Open in Melbourne from Jan. 17.

"I am very disappointed this happened because I was playing very well," Maleeva said.

"I served really well and he didn't put me under that much pressure on my service games," Ferreira said.

Shriver was addressing a breakfast function during the Australian Women's Hardcourt championship.

"She said she would like to see the time between matches filled with entertainment similar to that at basketball games or with player interviews."

Shriver said she was angered by ongoing arguments against equal prize money for the women at Grand Slam events.

"We'll never be as strong, we'll never be as fast as the men," she said.

"But that doesn't mean we can't be as entertaining."

"You've only got to look at the (Monica Seles-Steffi) Graf final at the Australian Open last year and compare it to say a men's match between two huge servers."

"It was an unbelievable match with the rallies that were going on."

Kafelnikov storms home

ADELAIDE, Australia, Jan 8: Rising youngster Yevgeny Kafelnikov stormed into his first ATP tour final here on Saturday where he will play seeded compatriot Alexander Volkov, reports AP.

Kafelnikov, ranked 102, bumbled Australian's last title hope Patrick Rafter 6-1, 7-5 in just under 80 minutes to reach Sunday's final.

Fourth seed Alexander Volkov ousted Swedish titleholder Nicklas Kulti in three sets in the other semifinal.

Kafelnikov, who has only been professional for two years, said he felt "unbelievable" to reach the final.

His ability, which is not reflected in his world ranking, has already seen him clinch a win against world number two Michael Stich.

After prolonged rain on Friday, the championship was forced to schedule two catch up quarter-finals on Saturday with Kulti having to resume his overnight match against Frenchman Guillaume Raoux.

Graf gets into the groove

HONG KONG, Jan 8: World number one Steffi Graf warmed up for this month's Australian Open with an important psychological victory over second-ranked Arantxa Sanchez in the final of an exhibition tournament on Friday, reports Reuter.

Graf battled back from the brink of defeat to beat the Spaniard 7-5, 6-7 (5-7), 7-5 in a match contested far more keenly than most show games in the run-up to the Australian Open starting in Melbourne on January 17.

Graf trailed 5-4 in the deciding set but two breaks of serve gave her a confidence-boosting win in just over two hours.

"I did not want to play that long," Graf said. "It was a close match — a little bit up and down for me."

"I have not played outdoors for a while so this way very necessary before Melbourne. It was a good warm up really."

Three cheers for TEL

PERTH, Jan 8: Players seem sure to demand that computer line-judging be installed at more professional tennis tournaments following a satisfactory week of trials at the Hopman Cup, reports Reuter.

Despite problems when Frenchman Cedric Pioline's magnesium racket confused the high-tech equipment and concern that it made the sport too impersonal, the TEL (Tennis Electronic Lines) system received high marks for its accuracy from both players and umpires.

Tournament director Paul McNamara said it was virtually certain the system would be used again next year and players involved in Friday's final between the Czech Republic and Germany gave the innovation their support.

Both Petr Korda and Bernd Karbacher predicted that the machine, which relies on an under-court magnetic system tracking iron filings inserted in the balls, would soon attract wider interest.

"I think it's a very good system, it's perfect for me and I hope they use it in a few more tournaments. I think the players will be happy to see it in the game," said Karbacher.

Korda was equally content. "It's something new — they're trying to improve tennis and I think it's been very successful," he said.

Tennis' best-known perfectionist Ivan Lendl, whose opportunity to test the system was curtailed by a straight sets defeat to Karbacher in his only match, was also keen.

In their quarterfinal action, No. 2 Richey Renberg defeated No. 7 Renzo Furlan of Italy 6-4, 6-2 and Robbie Weiss downed Jimmy Arias 6-0, 2-6, 6-3.

"I served really well and he didn't put me under that much pressure on my service games," Ferreira said.

In their quarterfinal action, No. 2 Richey Renberg defeated No. 7 Renzo Furlan of Italy 6-4, 6-2 and Robbie Weiss downed Jimmy Arias 6-0, 2-6, 6-3.

The world's third ranked player and defending Australian Open champion said he was in good condition and confident about winning three straight Australian crowns in Melbourne beginning Jan. 17.

"All I've got to do is go and hit some tennis balls and then see what happens," the 23-year-old American said.

"I am just here to get some matches in and hopefully play well and take some good form into Melbourne. The winning is something I can't control. I just go out there and play, and if I play well then maybe I can win."

Ryan, now the defensive co-ordinator of the Houston Oilers, said he is interested in replacing fired Atlanta Falcons coach Jerry Glanville and will also inquire about the vacant Washington Redskins job.

Glanville and Redskins coach Richie Petitbon were fired on Tuesday.

"I'd like to talk to anybody who has a head coaching job available," Ryan told the Houston Chronicle. "Maybe we can win the Super Bowl and somebody will be interested in me."

Many NFL observers say Ryan probably ruined his chances of gaining another head coaching post when he punched fellow Oilers assistant coach Kevin Gilbride on national television Sunday night during a 24-0 victory over the New York Jets.

Ryan said the fight is behind him and he is focused on the playoffs, but he admits coveting the two currently available jobs.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Huck's raft

4 Companion

4 Actress

8 Celeste

8 Satyr's counter-part

12 Raw rock

13 Theater award

14 Farming pref.

15 Proscription

16 Last moment

18 Small pigeon

20 Newsman Donaldson

21 Slant

24 Beat

28 Climbing legume

32 Harvest

33 Salary

34 Gets money for

36 Hockey legend

37 Likely trick takers

39 Save

41 Cattle roundup

43 Martha of

44 Polar

46 Trivial

50 Veteran

52 Prospector

55 "So that's it, eh?"

56 Otherwise

57 Grenoble

58 Barbie's beau

59 One may be pulled out of bed

60 Horace or Herbie

61 'A mouse'

DOWN

1 Chores

2 Saddam's place

3 Carte

4 Tolkein tribe

5 Sapporo sash

6 Torched

7 Shea squad

8 Dell denizen

9 Census statistic

10 Grecian vessel