

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 Reuters.

"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.



American figure skater Nancy Kerrigan describes the weapon used by an unknown assailant in an attack on her after a practice session for the 1994 US figure skating championship at a press conference in Detroit on Jan 7. — AFP photo

Davenport in Brisbane final

BRISBANE, Jan 8: American teenager Lindsay Davenport used a booming forehand to defeat Shi-ting Wang of Taiwan Saturday in the semi-final of the US dlr 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. I had a blast tonight.'"

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.

Several players have criticised tournament organizers for playing matches in the heat of

the day. On-court temperatures at the Milton Tennis Center have reached over 50 C (122 F).

Maleeva became the third player to withdraw from the tournament with a heat-related ailment.

Labat, a former No. 1 junior ranked 51 in the world, has been one of the few players who have coped adequately with the heat.

The 22-year-old left-hander practised in sweltering conditions in her home town of Buenos Aires for six weeks before arriving in Australia.

Like Davenport, Labat has gone through the tournament without dropping a set.

The event offers a first prize of dlr 27,000 and is one of a series of lead-up events to the Australian Open.

Ferreira blows Patrick McEnroe away

HONOLULU, Jan 8: Top-seeded Wayne Ferreira of South Africa served 14 aces on the way to defeating No 8 Patrick McEnroe 6-4, 6-4 Friday to advance to the semifinals of the Hawaii Open, reports AP.

Ferreira meets No 5 Jonathan Stark, a 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-5) winner over No 4 Brad Gilbert, in Saturday's semifinals.

In other quarterfinal action, No 2 Richey Reneberg 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.

Shriver said too many top players were reclusive and unwilling to spend time with the public and media.

"This is all at the same time when they're taking out millions of dollars," she said.

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, ranked 102, humbled Australian's last title holder 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 Reuters.

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 Reuters.

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 McNamee 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.

Courier upbeat

ADELAIDE, Jan 8: A relaxed Jim Courier, fresh from a break from tennis over Christmas, arrived in Adelaide on Saturday for the defence of the Rio Challenge title he has won for the last two years, reports AP.

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

Czechs clinch Hopman Cup

PERTH, Jan 8: Petr Korda and Jana Novotna walked away with 134,000 dollars and two diamond-encrusted tennis balls after helping the Czech Republic to outplay Germany in the final of the Hopman Cup on Friday, reports Reuters.

Korda brushed aside Bernd Karbacher 6-3, 6-4 to seal victory for his country over the defending champions after Novotna had raised her game in mid-match to beat Anke Huber 1-6, 6-4, 6-3.

It was the sixth year in succession that the team event had been won by a European pair, including 1988-89 when the title went to the former Czechoslovakia whose team included a Slav in the shape of Miloslav Mecir.

Korda's task was made a little easier when his opponent Karbacher began suffering from a hamstring strain in the second set.

By that time, however, there was little doubt about the result with the left-handed Korda continuing in the fashion which won him the 1.6 million-dollar first prize at last month's Grand Slam Cup.

Ranked number 12 on the computer, Korda retained his 100 per cent record in the tournament with typical flair, although he did allow Karbacher a brief comeback from 5-2 in the final set.

He settled the outcome on his third match point and now appears a leading contender for the Australian Open later this month.

Neither Novotna nor Huber are renowned for their consistency and in this case it was Huber who buckled under the pressure.

Having taken the first set with ease, she led 3-2 in the second before allowing her more experienced opponent back into the match. A double fault handed Novotna a crucial break for 4-3 and when the players began the final set it was Novotna once again who broke to lead 2-1.

The German was assured enough to regain a 3-2 lead but, for the second time, could not make it pay.

Of five break points in the final set she converted only one

and the moment of truth came on her own serve at the end of the seventh game. Mistakenly returning a ball from Novotna which was heading out, she lost the point and the game slipped away almost instantly.

Korda received a fulsome tribute from his beaten opponent after the 67-minute match. "Sometimes I felt like a spectator on the court," said Karbacher. "There are a lot of players at the moment who don't know what to do against Peter Korda."

Korda responded: "It's been a great start to the year and the first big trophy for our new country. Hopefully I'll be able to keep my form going in Sydney

next week and then at the Australian Open."

The diamond-studded tennis balls are worth around 20,000 dollars apiece.

Korda produced one final trick from his repertoire in the dead doubles rubber when he persuaded a waiter to deliver a bottle of champagne on a silver salver during a change of ends.

All four players enjoyed a glass of bubbly before returning to the court to complete their unfinished doubles business.

The bottle was practically empty by the time Germany won the lone set 8-3, giving the Czechs a final winning margin of 2-1.



Jana Novotna and Petr Korda of the Czech Republic proudly hold aloft the Hopman Cup after defeating Germany's Huber and Karbacher in the finals in Perth on Jan 7. Novotna defeated Huber 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the women's singles and Korda defeated Karbacher 6-3, 6-4 in the men's singles. — AFP photo

Ryan wants to be at the helm

HOUSTON, Jan 8: Buddy Ryan, whose tenure with the Philadelphia Eagles ended in his being fired, says he wants to be a head coach in the National Football League again, reports AP.

Ryan, now the defensive coordinator 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.

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

"Atlanta would be great," he said. "They've got a lot of good people on that team, especially on offense. I didn't get much of a chance to look at their defense before we played them this season."

As for the Redskins: "If an owner wants to hire a coach that can win, he knows where to find this one."

The Oilers' defence under Ryan has become one of the most aggressive in the NFL. It's most responsible for Houston's 11-game winning streak, 12-4 record and an AFC Central title.

Ryan's son and agent, Jim Ryan, predicted the fight with Gilbride will not cost him a chance at a head coaching job.

"With Buddy, you get a polarization — some hate him and some love him, and the ones who love him won't let something like that incident stand in the way," Jim Ryan said. "We'll check wherever there's an opening."

Oilers spokesman Bob Schranz said Wednesday he didn't know if there had been contact between either team and Ryan.

Oilers owner Bud Adams said he has no plans to fine either Ryan or Gilbride.

"I'm not fining anybody," Adams said in an interview published in Thursday's Houston Post. "I'm not giving them a raise, either."

Adams also said he believes the team would not be hurt by having both men back next season. Both have assured Adams that such an outburst would not recur.

"I told him (Ryan) that I didn't want more distractions like we had," Adams said. "He assured me there wouldn't be. That doesn't mean he and Kevin are going to be suite-mates."

Alami comes down to earth

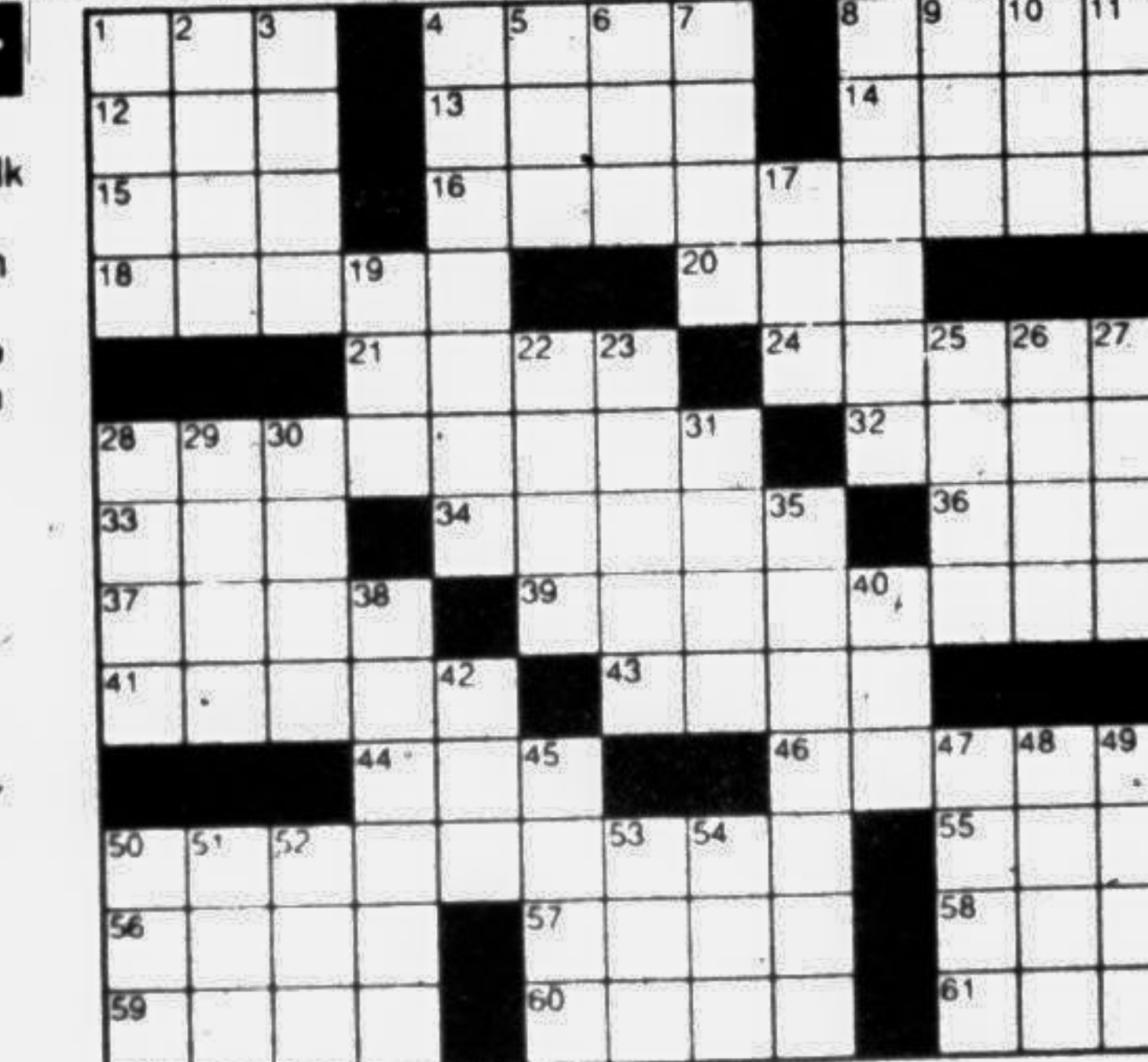
DOHA, Jan 8: Qualifier Karim Alami, first round conqueror of world number one Pete Sampras, had his hopes of progressing further quashed by Paul Haarhuis of Holland in the second round of the Qatar Open on Thursday, reports Reuters.

However, the young Moroccan put up a stiff battle in a match lasting over two and half hours before Haarhuis clinched victory 6-4, 6-7, 6-3.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	44 Polar	4 Tolkien	word
1 Huck's raft	employee	5 tribe	25 Tabby talk
companion	46 Trivial	5 Sapporo	26 South
4 Actress	50 Veteran	sash	American
Celeste	prospect	6 Torched	rubber
8 Satyr's	55 "So that's	7 Shea	27 Nashville
counter-	it, eh?"	squad	attraction
part	56 Otherwise	8 Dell	28 Mast
12 Raw rock	57 Grenoble	denizen	29 Texas
13 Theater	girlfriend	9 Census	radio
award	58 Barbie's	statistic	station
14 Farming:	beau	10 Grecian	30 Kept
pref.	59 One may	vessel	tabs on
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Donaldson	2 Saddam's	dwellers	42 Antique
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37 Likely trick		bravo	
takers		52 Put to	
39 Save		work	
41 Cattle		53 Aggress	
roundup		Thurman	
43 Martha of		54 Martini	
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Yesterday's answer 6-2



CRYPTOQUIP
P M Z S I O S Z S G A S A Z F
O T H O T X S H P K T P I T H Z
K I S M S I I S A Z F X T H T Z
O T H I I T A S Z F L S S
Yesterday's Cryptquip: SHOE SALESMAN NOT ONLY GOT A RAISE, BUT HIS BOSS IS BUYING HIM DINNER, TO BOOT.
Today's Cryptquip clue: I equals B
The Cryptquip 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.