

Rain dogs Shri Lankans on

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Shri Lanka's cricketers, dogged by bad weather at home for the past one month, found little respite at the start of their five-week tour of India this week, reports AFP.

Unseasonal rains have dented the tourists' much-needed net practice since their arrival here Tuesday for a series of three Tests and as many one-day internationals.

Worse, slushy ground conditions threaten to delay the start of their three-day tour opener against the Indian Board President's XI at the Kotla Oval here Thursday.

With the first Test scheduled to begin in Lucknow next Tuesday, the Shri Lankans are left woefully short of match practice.

"The rain appears to be following us everywhere," said Shri Lankan coach Bandula Warnapura, worried that his

men may not hit the right groove for the Test series. Warnapura said bad weather back home throughout December ruined the first-ever tour of the island by the West Indies and wiped out the conditioning camp that preceded the Indian tour.

During the wettest Indian tour, the one-off Test and a one-day international were rained out while two other internationals were disrupted by bad weather.

"We would have liked to get a full game here since it is the only match before the first Test, but who can defy the weather?" Warnapura said while supervising a light work out by his team.

With more rain forecast over the next two days, the only consolation for the Shri Lankans is that the Indian team's training camp here has also been disrupted.

The Shri Lankans, led by the beefy 30-year-old left-hander Arjuna Ranatunga, are ex-

pected to field a full Test side for the warm-up match.

Indian opener Navjot Singh Sidhu will captain the President's XI comprising mainly youngsters knocking on the doors of Test selection.

TEAMS

SHRI LANKA (from): Arjuna Ranatunga (captain), Aravinda de Silva, Roshan Mahanama, Hashan Tillekeratne, Sanath Jayasuriya, Jayananda Samarawera, Ruwan Kalpage, Pubudu Dassanayake, Muthiah Muralidharan, Pramodaya Wickramasinghe, Dulip Liyanage, Don Anurasiri, Anura Gunawardene, Ravindra Pushpakumara, Nisal Fernando, Mervin Atapattu.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S XI (from): Navjot Singh Sidhu (captain), Vikram Rathore, Rizwan Samshad, Rajesh Puri, Rahul Dravid, Saurav Ganguly, Avinash Vaidya, Ashish Kapoor, Venkatesh Prasad, Prashant Vaidya, Narendra Hirwani, Utpal Chatterjee, Bhupinder Singh, Amay Khurasia.

Frail Korda's fat purse

SYDNEY, Jan 12: Petr Korda is the palest, frailest figure in professional tennis but there is nothing unhealthy about his bank balance. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger would be impressed by the Zie of the Czech's cheques, reports Reuter.

The last month has been one Korda will treasure for ever. He scooped the 1.6 million US dollar jackpot at the Grand Slam Cup in December, downing the world's top two players Pete Sampras and Michael Stich on the way, and then emerged from the Christmas break to help the Czech Republic win the Hopman Cup in Perth.

His wife, former player Regina Rajchova, gave birth to their first child, Jessica, last year and Korda gives the impression of being among the happiest men in the game.

All of which means, as 1994 unfolds, that Korda has become a name to be reckoned with.

After beating the unorthodox Swede Mikael Pernfors in his opening match at the New South Wales Open on Tuesday, though, Korda was keeping his secret to himself.

"Tactics? I only have one tactic... hit the ball over the net into the court," he grinned. "Honestly, it's true. If you're hitting the fence, it's not much good."

Not many of his opponents are fooled by such homespun claims, even from a man whose

chief claim to fame used to be that he was a ball-boy for Ivan Lendl in his native Prague.

Australian Wally Masur is typical: "If he gets on a roll and starts playing shots like he can, he's capable of beating everyone



PETR KORDA

very easily."

It's a familiar cry. "I felt like a spectator on the court," complained Germany's Bernd Karbacher after becoming Korda's final victim in the Hopman Cup.

"There are a lot of players at the moment who don't know what to do against Petr Korda. It's no disgrace to lose against him."

With the Australian Open looming next week, it is clear Korda has suddenly become a significant man to avoid,

regardless of his position at number 11 in the world rankings.

Apart from the money, the Grand Slam Cup has given him a whole new respect within a sport which, since his professional entry in 1988, has regarded him as a gifted but erratic performer.

Even his appearance in the 1992 French Open final appeared slightly flattering as he avoided all the seeds en route to his final date with American Jim Courier. He lost 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 but is now a significantly more consistent player.

"I don't know what's going to happen next week, let alone next year, but I'm healthy and I'm really enjoying my tennis," Korda said, reflecting momentarily on his big pay-day last month.

"I was like a marathon man in Germany I felt I gave all I had. But the most important thing was that I was able to make the important points to beat the number one and two players in the world."

Beating both Sampras and Stich in five sets on consecutive days made up for an unsettling 1993 in which he finished outside the top 10 for the first time in three years.

Injuries were the chief cause, including time spent recovering from a heart complaint.

"I had one good week and that's it," the left-hander said. "I'd like to put everything else in a box and forget about it."

Aussie Open on Prime Sports

The Star TV network inaugurates another sensational year of tennis with the 1994 Australian Open, the first Grand Slam tennis tournament of the season. This event takes place in Melbourne, Australia from January 17th-30th, 1994. Star TV's live coverage on Prime Sports begins Monday, January 17th at 2:30 pm (BST), says a press release.

Star TV's anchorman, Brian Langley accompanied by Indian tennis legend, Vijay Amritraj and a Prime Sports crew will be on location this year. They will be hosting live interviews with various tennis professionals as well as providing daily reports on previous day's play and upcoming match analysis.

Prime Sports' telecast will offer viewers over 120 hours live coverage through to the finals, which will broadcast on a short delay. Times of play are divided into a day and night sessions, allowing for a break in action, this format will take place through to the semifinals.

Prime Sports' men's and women's singles, doubles and mixed doubles day sessions will broadcast from January 17th-23rd at 6:00 am. Night time sessions from January 17th-22nd begin at 2:30 pm (BST).

The 1994 Ford Australian Open, now in its 89th year, offering a total prize purse of 8 million Australian dollars, is the richest sporting event in Australia and will once again host a showcase player entry.

Of the 128 men's entry 44 of the top 50 players including defending champion Jim Courier, Pete Sampras, Stefan Edberg, Michael Stich, Goran Ivanisevic, Michael Chang and Cedric Pioline will compete. The women's competition will feature 27 of the top 30, and will include the likes of Steffi Graf, Jennifer Capriati, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Mary Pierce, Conchita Martinez, Gabriela Sabatini, Jana Novotna, Anke Huber, Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere, and Kimiko Date. Defending champion, Monica Seles has announced that she will be passing up the tournament as she continues to recuperate from a stab wound.

Only doubles for Cash

MELBOURNE, Jan 12: Former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash has pulled out of the singles at the Australian Open because of a lingering back problem, tournament organisers said today, reports Reuter.

Cash had declined a wildcard invitation to play in the Grand Slam event which begins on Monday, citing a back strain, Tennis Australia president Geoff Pollard told reporters.

"We are disappointed that Pat will not play singles," Pollard said.

But Cash, 28, had indicated that he would play in the doubles at Melbourne's Flinders Park, Pollard added.

The 1987 Wimbledon champion hurt his back during his first-round loss last week at the Australian men's hard-court championships.

The Adelaide event was the first ATP tournament Cash had played in for 15 months after recurring knee problems.

Hide retains WBO title

LONDON, Jan 12: British heavyweight champion Herbie Hide retained his title on Tuesday — without throwing a punch, reports Reuter.

The British Boxing Board of Control decided it would be an "injustice" if they stripped the Nigerian-born fighter of his crown, even though, because of a Home Office (Interior Ministry) mistake, he was not actually a British subject when he won the title 11 months ago.

The board decided, on the advice of lawyers, to use their discretion to save Hide's championship, as the nationality doubt was caused through no fault of his own.

Although the 22-year-old, a British resident since he was a baby, applied for citizenship in 1988, it was not completely processed until April, two months after he beat Michael Murray to win the vacant title.

Heavyweight rival Henry Akinwande, the European and Commonwealth champion, had issued a writ, claiming Hide should be stripped of his title.

Hide said: "I am absolutely delighted. It now means that I can get into the ring against Michael Bennit on March 19 as British champion."

Fellow Briton Bennit, the World Boxing Organisation (WBO) heavyweight champion, and Hide were involved in a brawl after a press conference at a London hotel on Monday.

Hide ended up with blood on his lip and buttons ripped off his shirt. London-born Bennit, who has lived most of his life in the US had his suit torn. The boxing board issued a severe warning to both fighters and said an inquiry would be held.



Conchita Martinez of Spain is really pumped up after beating Wiltrud Probst of Germany at the New South Wales Open in Sydney yesterday. She won 2-6, 7-5, 6-2. — AFP photo

Muster not amused at all

SYDNEY, Jan 12: Top tennis player Thomas Muster says tennis is boring and he wouldn't go and pay to watch a match.

Muster, the third seed and last year's finalist, bowed out of the New South Wales Open to Czech Republic qualifier Daniel Vacek here on Wednesday, but saved his best serve for the interview room, reports AFP.

At a time when fans are bemoaning a paucity of tennis personalities and television ratings are declining, Muster's views add further weight to the growing concerns of modern tennis.

"Tennis in general is boring to watch, especially indoors," said the super-fit Austrian left-hander.

"There's only a serve or a mistake. There's not much tennis."

"I wouldn't go and watch... I don't know what these people (spectators) go and watch."

Muster said he'd rather go to a basketball game instead.

"These days you can play well and then a guy that's two metres tall comes up to serve

you out, they never learnt how to play ground-strokes, but they make it," he said.

"That's just how it is — it's not much to do with tennis any more. In 10 years you will have guys two metres 10, just serving."

But Muster has no panacea for the ills of tennis.

"It's so traditional, it's like wanting hard-courts at Wimbledon — you can't do it," he said.

"You can't change the rules, it doesn't make sense."

"It's like taking the queen out of the chess game."

"You cannot punish someone for something he can do very well. Why should you punish a server?"

"I just said it's a boring game because these guys play it well it's not because I lost a match today."

The world No. 9 became 22-year-old Czech Daniel Vacek's second biggest scalp in his infant career, bowing out 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-4 in a second round match.

Vacek upset former world No. 1 Stefan Edberg in the

second round at New Haven in the United States last August.

Elsewhere, Ivan Lendl's progress from last year's "lousy" form, gathered momentum when he overcame Australian Jamie Morgan 6-3, 7-5. The former world No. 1, now ranked at 20, says he is "50 per cent" better than 1993.

Lendl served eight aces and hit 21 forehand and backhand winners in moving into the third round against compatriot Richey Reneberg.

Petr Korda complained of the distractions of an outside court as he diced with elimination in prevailing 2-6, 6-4 (7/3) over Japan's Shuzo Matsuoka.

There were balls bouncing into our court from other courts, people were walking about and even live television interviews were going on... there was no security at all," said Korda, who now plays compatriot Vacek in the third round.

World No. 1 Pete Sampras had a roller-coaster ride in his 6-1, 4-6, 7-5 win over Australian Jason Stoltenberg.

Wilander, Cash get wild cards

MELBOURNE, Jan 12: Sweden's Mats Wilander and Australia's Pat Cash have received wildcard entries into the Australian Open tennis tournament that begins Monday, reports AP.

Tennis Australia said Wednesday that former Wimbledon champion Cash, recovering from a serious knee injury, and Wilander, a former Australian Open champion now attempting a comeback, will be joined by Australians Darren Cahill, Michael Tebutt and Sandon Stolle.

Other men's wildcards include Australians Michael Tebutt and Brent Larkham while Nicole Pratt, Jenny Byrne and Rennae Stubbs are among the all-Australian group, that received women's wildcards.

Larkham, 22, moved from 440 in the world to 180 during the past 12 months and hopes to consolidate his position with a strong showing in the grand slam tournament at the National Tennis Centre.

Reduction rules black cagers

SAN ANTONIO, Texas, Jan 12: Black US college basketball coaches and players, angry over new scholarship limitations, plan to boycott games for the rest of the season, reports AP.

They are angry that cutbacks may mean lost opportunities for black youths.

"In all likelihood there will be a boycott. But I am reluctant to give a time and date," said Drake University coach Rudy Washington, president of the Black Coaches Association.

Players and coaches are expected to participate and they are talking about the rest of the season," Washington said.

College basketball, a main feeder system for the National Basketball Association, is a multi-million dollar US business governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The group voted down a plan to restore a scholarship to basketball teams after cutting two last year.

Major schools with black coaches include Georgetown, Temple and Southern California. A possible start for the boycott is Saturday, a day with many games scheduled and the birthday of slain US civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

Commissioners of 33 major college basketball conferences scheduled a telephone meeting Thursday to discuss how to handle any boycott.

Kerrigan says she was lucky

NEW YORK, Jan 12: Figure skater Nancy Kerrigan says she would have been injured much more seriously if her attacker hit her a little lower on her right knee, reports AP.

"My therapist says that if it's probably only a finger lower, I wouldn't be walking," Kerrigan said Tuesday night on "Dateline NBC."

A man struck Kerrigan with a club last Thursday in Detroit following a practice for the US Figure Skating Championships. Kerrigan's bruised knee prevented her from defending her title, but she was named to the US Olympic team with champion Tonya Harding.

"I'm really lucky they're allowing me to go and be on the team because I didn't get to compete," Kerrigan said.

Bowe chimes in with Clinton

WASHINGTON, Jan 12: Down the street from US President Bill Clinton's well-guarded White House, people live in terror, reports AP.

Children on youth football teams are killed in drive-by shootings. Some plan their funerals and say they cannot imagine being alive in 20 years.

The choir at Eastern High School visited Australia last year and plans a trip to France later this year... if they survive. There were 466 murders here in 1993, 15 more than the year before.

"When you're on the way to school, you worry about what can happen to you," student Laticia Moore said. "You may not be doing something wrong, but you might get hurt anyway."

Welcome to the southeast neighbourhood of the US capital, where policeman Jason White was killed by a gunman two weeks ago. Residents are poor and mostly black. Police are often outnumbered. But they have a new ally — former heavyweight boxing champion Riddick Bowe.

Bowe announced a "funds for guns" programme here Tuesday in which he will pay 100 dollars for every gun given to police. Bowe began the programme by surrendering his

own 10 mm Silver Smith and Wesson pistol.

Authorities hope 1,000 guns will be exchanged at Union Temple Baptist Church on Saturday, the birthday of slain US civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

"I'm trying to lead by example," Bowe said. "If we can save even one life, then 100,000 dollars is worth it."

Bowe said the slaying of policemen white motivated him to start the programme. Bowe said he still fears gunmen.

"Myself, at times, I am afraid. Very much so," Bowe said. "Everyone is afraid at one time or another. I would feel real bad if somebody broke into my house and used by gun against me. I decided I wanted to get rid of it and do something to help other people."

Bowe, joking that his fists were the only "six-shooters," he needed, said he became fearful of his gun the first time he gripped it, at a shooting range near Atlantic City. Bowe said he never fired the weapon.

"I'm scared of it. I don't even want to hold it," he said. "The first time I held it, I didn't like it. I don't feel like I should use it. Everyone should be afraid of them."

Washington police chief Fred Thomas agrees.

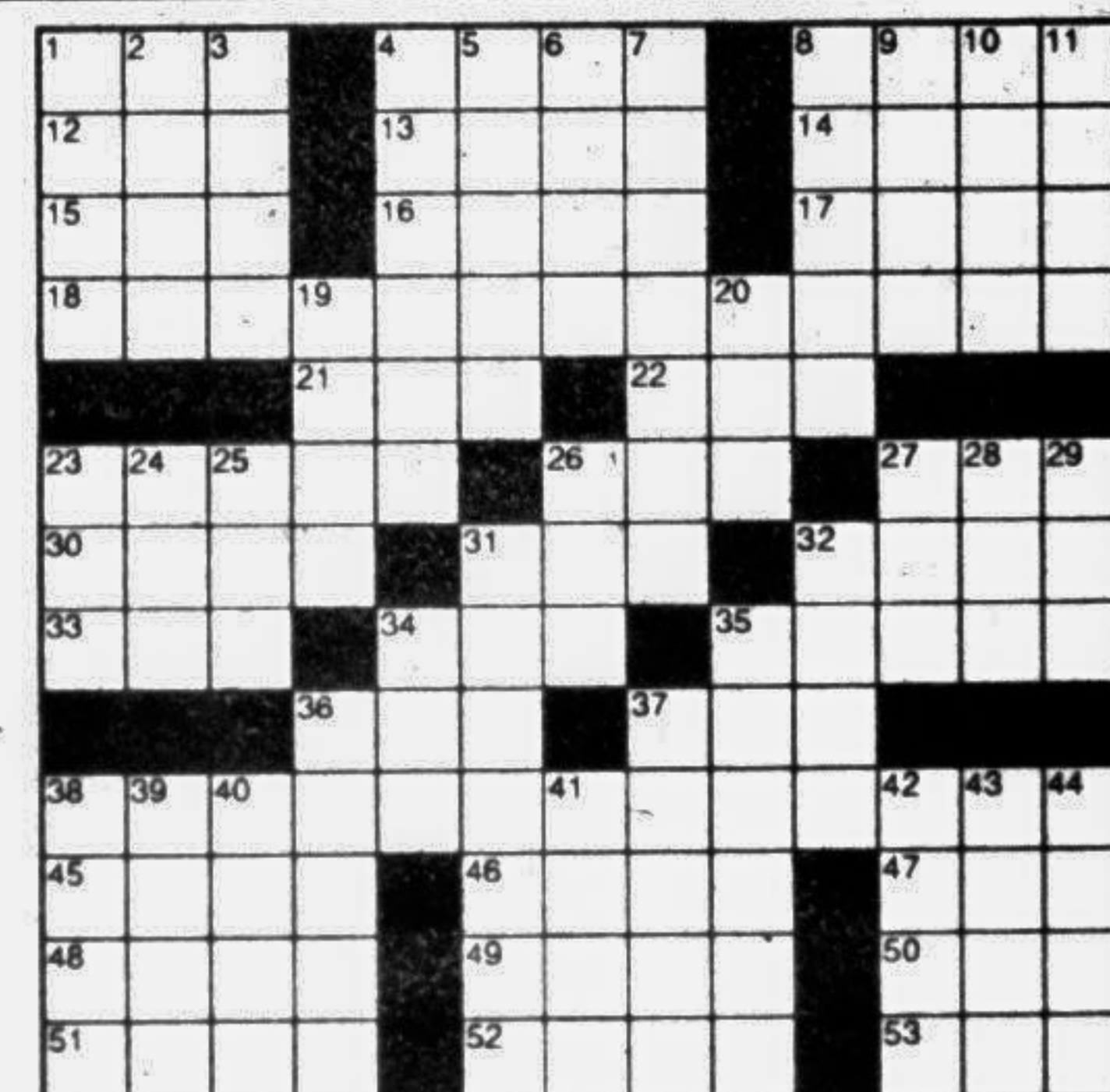
"Every gun we take off the street can save five or six lives."



World Boxing Organisation (WBO) champion American Michael Bennit (R) and British challenger Herbie Hide (L) have go at each other after their press conference in London on Jan 10, two months ahead of their coming bout. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	Apples	daughter	accessory
1 Period	37 Nebr.	3 Frill for	25 Amy's
4 Door-frame part	38 Hit movie of 1993	4 Bantered teasingly	26 Grow
8 Worry	45 Clinton's home-town	5 Garden pest	27 Dickens' pen name
12 Debtor's letters	46 Vivacity	6 Carriage	28 Pub
13 Sheriff Taylor's boy	47 Against	7 LBJ's Him and Her, e.g.	29 Potation
14 California city	48 — arms	8 Boxer Patterson	31 "Let's kill all the —"
15 Tiny socialist?	49 Split	9 1948	32 Shak.
16 New York field	50 Miss Piggy's pronoun	10 Hitchcock tour de force	33 Heart-string sound
17 Admitting clients	51 "Monopoly" needs	11 Perfect place	34 Supporting
18 Zoo howler	52 Prognosticator	12 Turner or Louise	35 Honus or Lindsay
21 Flushed	53 Conclusion	19 Grizzled	36 It's part of the act
22 Top	DOWN	20 Smote	37 Tart
23 Wanderer	1 Use an old phone	23 Without delay	38 Sound of hard impact
26 Drenched	2 Eugene's	24 Kimono	39 Kachina worshiper
27 Bruce Wayne's inspiration	Solution time: 23 mins.		
30 Act the robot			
31 Vegas intro			
32 "J'accuse" writer			
33 False hood?			
34 Office machine			
35 Shrivel			
36 Emulate Johnny			



CRYPTOQUIP

CTIXJQYX LB PJQTZF'I
CVVJGZ IXB PTJIXUFY,
LB IGUBZ IXBD JF
VJG RUYXR

Yesterday's Cryptquip: THAT LEARNED WANDERER WAS CALLED A ROADS SCHOLAR.

Today's Cryptquip clue: T equals L

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.