

Agassi in semis

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Feb. 26: Andre Agassi overwhelmed Bart Gilbert 6-1, 6-2 on Friday and advanced to the semifinals of the \$288,750 Arizona men's tennis championships, reports Reuter.

"I don't know if you can call a match like that easy," said Agassi, who won 10 of the first 11 games and captured 62 of the 98 points during the 59-minute rout of the third-seeded American.

"Certainly the score would lead one to believe it was easy," Agassi said. "Against a player like Bart who's been around the game so long and knows how to put together the right points at the right time, you never really feel like the match is under control," he said. "You always worry about him getting back into it."

Tonight I remained patient, stuck to my game plan and it really paid dividends," said Agassi. The 1992 Wimbledon champion, who has slipped to 32nd in the ATP Tour world rankings.

"I think tonight he expected me to come out and give him a lot of pace, and I didn't do that. I threw a curve at him and he didn't adjust to it. Tonight I did everything well. It was surprising."

"Sometimes you just don't play your best," Gilbert said. "I wish I could have shown the fans something better but it was just one of those nights."

Andre played a smart match," said Gilbert, who has split eight matches with his former Davis Cup teammate. "He's one of those guys when he's on fire, he's like a microwave. I just didn't hit it tonight and he pestered me."

Malibu Washington was satisfied to get through to his first semifinal of the year.

"I don't think it was a great match," said the world's 22nd ranked player. "We were both making a lot of errors."

Washington, 23, thought he had the match in hand against the 1992 desert champion. "After I won the tiebreak, he kind of fell apart a little bit and made it easy for me. I just wanted to play tough, hang on, and not give him many openings."

Verdy very lucky

TOKYO, Feb. 26: Verdy Kawasaki Sunday beat Gimnasia Y Esgrima of Argentina 4-2 in a penalty shootout and won the Sanwa Bank Cup Sunday, reports AP.

The penalty shootout came after the 1993 Japanese Professional Soccer League champion Verdy Kawasaki and the AFA Torneo Copa Centenario Campeón Gimnasia Y Esgrima struggled to a 2-2 tie in the 90-minute regulation time in the match before 45,617 spectators at National Stadium.

Guerra headed into the centre of the goal after receiving a volley pass from Gustavo Barros Schelotto 28 minutes into the first half as Gimnasia led 1-0 after the first half.

Verdy played with 10 players in the second half as Japanese goal keeper Shinkichi Kikuchi was ordered out of the ground due to a rough play.

In the second half, Verdy's ace striker Kazuyoshi Miura celebrated his 27th birthday with a tying shot. Miura directly struck a corner kick into the goal with his left leg six minutes into the second half.

Easy winners

SINGAPORE, Feb. 26: In what turned out to be merely a formality the favourites all breezed through the quarter-finals of the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup Badminton championships at the Singapore Badminton Hall here Friday, reports AP.

In the men's section the two favoured finalists South Korea and China made short work of their opponents to reach the last four. South Korea defeated Chinese Taipei 4-1 in Group A while China trounced Thailand 5-0 in Group B.

Chinese Taipei and Thailand who finished second in their respective groups also made it to the last four.

In the women's Uber Cup South Korea, Australia, Japan and Thailand made it to the last four. South Korea topped Group A with a 5-0 win over Australia while Japan defeated Thailand 5-0 in Group B.

Australia and Thailand as runner-up in their respective groups made it to the semi-finals which will be on a knock-out basis.

Three teams from each of the two events will qualify for the finals to be held in Jakarta this May. The crucial match will be between the beaten semi-finalists to decide the third places for Jakarta where eight teams will vie for the two titles.

Indonesia as hosts are automatic qualifiers for both the events while the European Zone championships now in progress in Glasgow will see three top teams go to Jakarta.

The other automatic qualifiers are Thomas Cup holders Malaysia and China, the Uber Cup holders.



Russian Vladimir Kramnik (L) is watched by his Indian opponent Viswanathan Anand (R) as he takes down his opening move during their game of the international chess tournament "Ciudad de Linares" in Linares on Feb. 24. — AFP photo

Seles has a new perspective



NEW YORK, Feb. 26: Monica Seles, still suffering the psychological effects of being stabbed in the back, says she will return to the courts only when she feels the game can be fun for her again, reports Reuter.

"The only right time for me to play again is when I can see myself and think only this: 'gosh, I'm happy again. This is fun,'" Seles said in an interview in the March issue of Tennis Magazine.

The horrifying knifing attack during a match last April by a deranged German fan who idolised Steffi Graf has clearly transformed the 20-year-old Seles, who refuses to set a date for her competitive return.

Her thoughts now speak far more to the psychological rather than physical damage of a knife wound between the shoulder blades.

"Before I was stabbed, I always lived for tomorrow — my next match, my next tournament," said the Yugoslav-born star, who won eight Grand Slam singles titles by the age of 19.

"If I've learned one thing from all that's happened to me it's that if you would know what tomorrow brings, you may not want to live it."

Seles, who was known off court for her somewhat daffy, giggly-filled, high-speed speech, seems more thoughtful and mature.

"I've had a lot of time to think since that day and a lot of time to decide what my priorities are," said Seles, who in 1991 became the youngest top-ranked tennis player in history at age 17.

"I don't spend any time looking over my shoulder, in fact, now I'm less afraid to try lots of the things I never had a chance to do," she said, citing skiing and ice skating as activities she shunned in the past for fear of injury.

"When I play tennis again, I have to play it for the right reason," she said.

"I don't want to play to get my number one ranking back. I don't want to play for the attention or to earn more. I don't even want to play because the world wants to see me do it...."

"I only want to play because I love the game, which is the reason I began to play at age seven in the first place," added Seles, who told Tennis Magazine she has been working out under the guidance of renowned track coach Bob Kersee and his Olympic champion wife, Jackie Joyner-Kersee.

Seles admits she has some psychological struggles ahead. "One of the most important things I've learned over the last year is that I'm the only one who has to deal with the reality of what happened to me."

"That reality is so strange and shocking, in so many ways,

that I never set a timetable (to play again)."

It has not helped Seles' mental recovery to know that her attacker, shockingly, received only a suspended sentence from a Hamburg court. With Seles sidelined, Graf regained the top ranking, which was Guenther Parche's stated aim.

"The guy who attacked me got what he wanted and he was let out free," she said. "No matter how you look at it, the message sent by that is that what he did to me was okay."

Seles said she has found working with Joyner-Kersee, the Olympic heptathlon champion, to be rewarding.

"You would think it would be intimidating to work with Jackie, but she's the most down-to-earth person on earth," Seles said. "Being anywhere near her is inspiring."

The player whose fighting spirit was unrivalled on the women's tour and who always seemed supremely focused on the next shot, the next point, now is thinking about her place in tennis history.

"I don't want to be remembered for grunting and giggling. I hated being known for that," she admits. "And I don't want to be the one who got stabbed."

"I want to be remembered for my game and I want to give something back to the game...."

"There's still a lot more I want to accomplish."

Graf gets there in the end



INDIAN WELLS, Calif., Feb. 26: Top-seeded Steffi Graf had her toughest time yet, but still was a convincing winner, in the \$1.5 million Evert Cup on Friday, beating Ginger Helgeson 6-1, 6-3 in a quarterfinal match, reports AP.

Graf was extended to one hour, 19 minutes by the unseeded Helgeson, who won one more game than Graf lost in her first two matches at the Hyatt Grand Champions Resort.

Graf, of Germany, is ranked No. 1 in the world. She has played 15 matches this year without losing a set.

In Saturday's semifinals, Graf will face 16-year-old Iva Majoli of Croatia, who upset fourth-seeded Natalia Zvereva of Belarus 6-3, 7-6 (7-2).

In Saturday's other semifinal, sixth-seeded Amanda

Coetzer of South Africa will face No. 3 Lindsay Davenport.

Coetzer upset defending champion Mary Joe Fernandez 6-2, 2-6, 7-6, (7-4) on Friday while the 17-year-old Davenport rallied for a 4-6, 7-6 (7-3) 6-0 victory over No. 8 Judith Wiesner of Austria.

Helgeson had two break points on Graf in the seventh game of the second set with Graf leading 4-2. However, Graf held service. She held service again in the final game of the match, although Helgeson again had a break point but couldn't take advantage.

"She's obviously a better player than the ones I've played before," Graf said. "I had to concentrate. I was up-and-down, but I played the big points. I have to always be ready and get my shots."

"No matter how the match goes, I'm always happy to win," Helgeson said she believed she made Graf "earn 90 per cent of

her points. I'm happy with the way I played, I pushed her."

Zvereva complained about line calls after her match.

"I got ripped off," she said. "I thought I had a good chance to win the first set, and something just didn't click. The bad calls stressed me out. The best way to handle them is to try to have fun and be humorous."

Fernandez, the No. 2 seed, had beaten Coetzer in the tournament finals last year. However, Coetzer turned the tables this time in a hard-fought match that lasted two hours, 10 minutes.

"I kept thinking about last year's match, because everything is so similar," Coetzer said. "Mary Joe, when she gets behind, starts attacking. When she gets ahead, she starts missing."

Fernandez won the first three games of the third set before Coetzer won the next three. Neither player led by more than one game after that.

Michel knows Milla's fate

NEW YORK, Feb. 26: Roger Milla, the veteran player who helped Cameroon to the World Cup quarter-finals in 1990, wants to return to the team but coach Henri Michel appears distinctly underwhelmed by the news, reports Reuter.

The very mention of the man's name on Thursday seemed enough to cloud the Frenchman's face, bring an expletive to his lips and generally spoil his day.

"Every day I get the question Roger Milla? I don't know," he said with a shrug.

"He's the one who talks. I am the one who decides. It is not the same thing at all. Roger Milla has been retired for four years, he has just played a match and we will have to see how that went," Michel said.

"I certainly shouldn't be making any decisions today," he added at a World Cup meeting in New York.

Milla, now 42, was brought out of retirement at the last World Cup at the insistence of the country's president. Known for his exuberant hip-wriggling antics at the corner flag after scoring a goal, he became a star.

He has since said he wants another comeback.



US figure skater Tonya Harding is in tears at the beginning of her performance because the lace of her skate was broken in Hamar on Feb. 25. Harding was allowed to perform again at the end of her group competition. — AFP photo

Clinton delighted

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26: President Clinton said Friday he was proud of American Nancy Kerrigan's silver medal performance in the finals of the women's Olympic figure skating competition, reports Reuter.

"I'm proud of her," Clinton told reporters as he left a social dinner in the Washington's affluent Georgetown section following the Massachusetts figure skater's narrow loss to gold medal winner Oksana Baiul of Ukraine.

Kerrigan received first-place marks for her free programme from four of nine judges to win the silver. She had led the women's competition after skating an error-free technical programme of Wednesday.

But the President had to wait until he got back to the White House to see Kerrigan's actual performance.

"CBS, which is broadcasting the games from Lillehammer, Norway, televised the competition on a tape-delayed basis, and the President instructed his staffers not to tell him who won because he wanted to find out for himself, an aide said."

Nonetheless, the President, who has faithfully been watching the Olympics, said that despite finding out the winner earlier in the evening he was eager to see the competition on television.

He told reporters as he climbed into his limousine: "I'm going home to watch it now. I've got it on tape."

Seeds sail

ROTTERDAM, Feb. 26: Seeds Michael Stich, Goran Ivanisevic and Wayne Ferreira and unseeded Paul Haarhuis reached the semifinals of the 600,000 dollars Rotterdam world indoor tennis tournament of Friday, reports Reuter.

But Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the 20-year-old Russian who knocked out third-seeded Swede Magnus Gustafsson in the second round on Thursday, tumbled out of contention losing in three sets to Ferreira, the fifth-seeded South African.

In today's semifinals Dutchman Haarhuis will play German Stich and the Croat Ivanisevic will play Ferreira of South Africa.

Stich the top seed, had little trouble with Rodolphe Gilbert of France and won 7-5, 6-3.

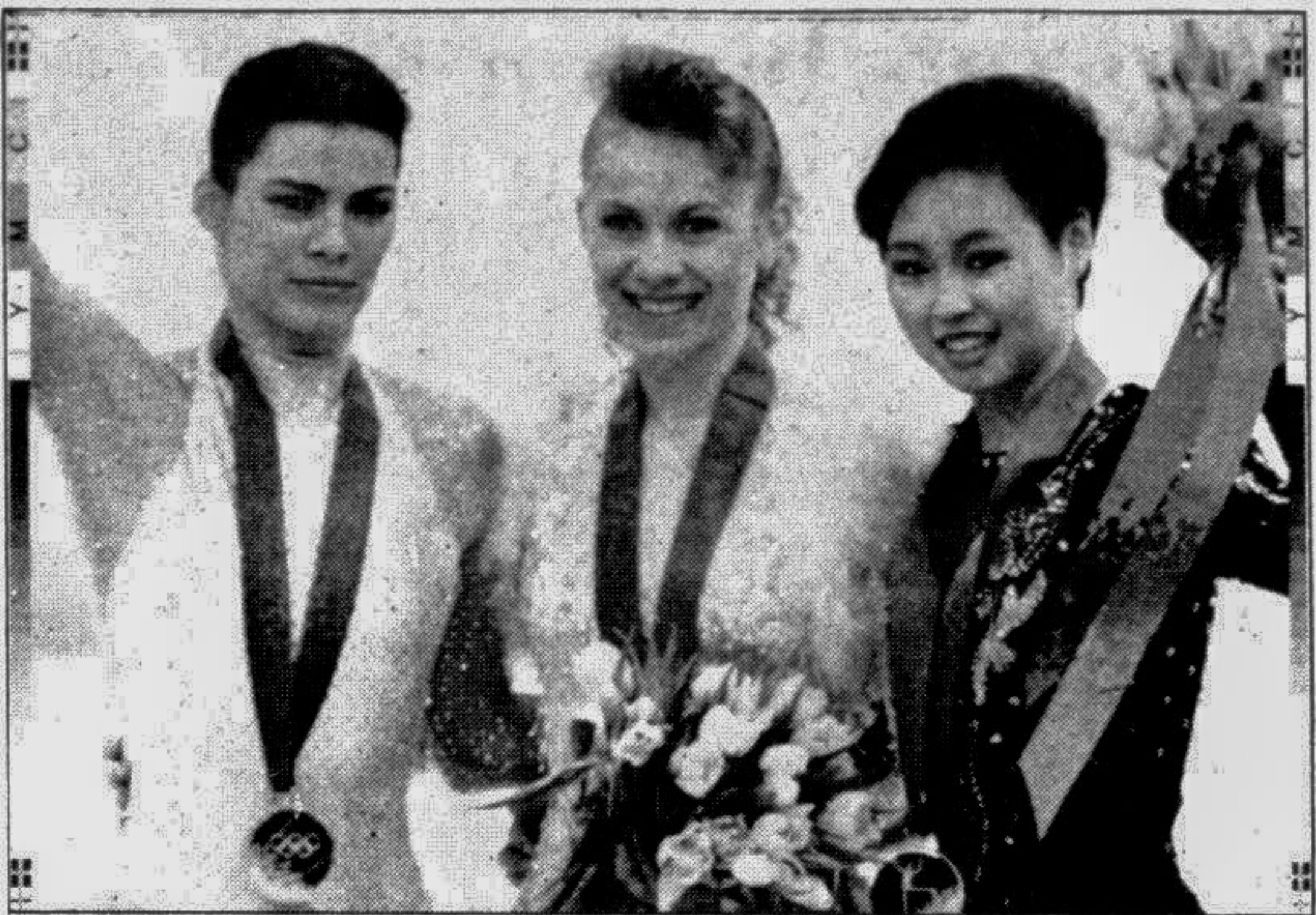
The German, ranked four in the world, was eliminated during the early stages of the tournament in Stuttgart last week, but made sure he did not slip up again moving smoothly into the last four with a convincing performance.

Second-seeded Ivanisevic also had no difficulty reaching the semis, beating eighth-seeded Jonas Svensson of Sweden 6-2, 6-4.

Ivanisevic demolished Svensson's resistance with a barrage of aces — and fittingly ended the match with yet another unreturnable service.

Ferreira had a tough task against Kafelnikov, the up-and-coming Russian who hammered Gustafsson to a 6-1, 6-3 defeat on Thursday.

The South African nullified Kafelnikov's forehand, his most potent weapon, by continually playing to his backhand and his tactics paid off with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 victory.



Ukraine's Oksana Baiul (C), US Nancy Kerrigan (L) and China's Lu Chen pose on the podium after being awarded gold, silver and bronze medals respectively in the figure skating event of the XVII Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer on Feb. 25. — AFP photo

Baiul steals Kerrigan's gold



HAMAR, Norway, Feb. 26: Oksana Baiul bravely defied the odds and captured Olympic gold from Nancy Kerrigan by a whisker on Friday night after 'looking' for most of the day like a probable casualty of a practice crash, reports Reuter.

The 16-year-old Ukrainian with the artistic instincts of a prima ballerina required pain-deadening injections for leg and back injuries and was given the go-ahead to compete an hour before she took the ice in the women's figure skating final.

With a smile on her face and a sticking plaster on her right shin covering three stitches, she then went out and edged the American on a tie-breaking vote.

With the eight other judges calling it a 4-4 draw, former East German men's world champion Jan Hoffman gave Baiul 5.9 for artistry to 5.8 for Kerrigan after awarding the American 5.8 for technique to 5.7 for Baiul.

The higher artistic mark put Baiul at the top.

It was an incredible performance from the theatrical world champion, who became the second youngest Olympic title holder behind Norwegian Sonja Henie, who won when she was 15 in 1928.

She stood on the winner's podium only hours after barely getting through her dress rehearsal because of the injuries, sustained in a high-speed collision with German skater Tanja Szewczenko during practice on Thursday.

She struggled to deal with her emotions, biting her lip to try to stem the tears as she was awarded the gold medal.

"Actually at that moment I had very mixed feelings," she said later. "I had pain in my back from the injury and my emotions were flowing because of my happiness."

She had cried in the arms of her coach and surrogate mother, Galina Zmievskaya, as her marks went up.

"The tough life that I've had up to now, this difficult life, gave me the strength to compete," said Baiul, whose

mother died three years ago of cancer. Her father had deserted the family when she was two.

Despite the trauma and doubts about whether she would even skate, she squeezed a performance from herself that did not seem possible for someone so sorely hurt so close to curtain time.

The injections obviously did the trick as she performed to a medley of musicals including "My Fair Lady", "The Sound of Music", "West Side Story", "A Chorus Line" and "Cabaret".

She completed five triples through one was two-footed, tossing in an extra triple toe loop late in her routine after scaling one down to a double just before it.

That bit of improvisation might just have turned the tide in her favour for the only combination she included in her programme was an easy double axel-double toe loop.

She skated right after Kerrigan, who won Wednesday's technical programme with Baiul second, had turned in the best free skating performance of her life.

One mistake, when she did a double flip instead of triple on her opening jump, almost went unnoticed after Kerrigan then did five triples including two in combination with one another.

She felt no dissatisfaction over her silver medal.

"I'm very proud of myself for what I did. A lot of effort from my coaches, my fam-

Beenhakker won't take it lying down

AMSTERDAM, Feb. 26: Leo Beenhakker plans to get his revenge for his sacking in Saudi Arabia by helping Holland's World Cup campaign, reports AP.

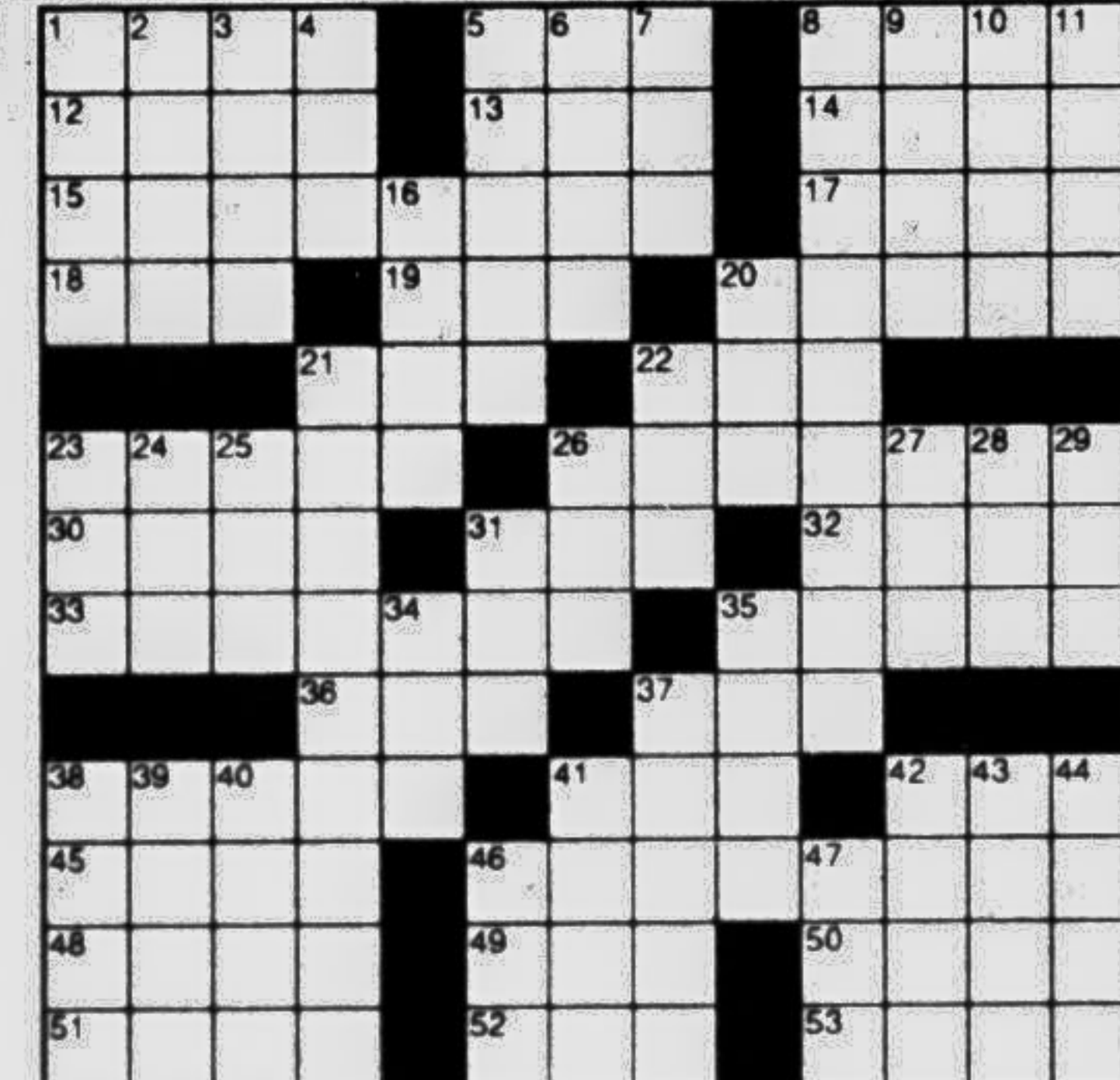
The two countries are in the same qualifying group at the World Cup finals in America and Beenhakker is to put his bitter experience in Saudi Arabia to use in helping Dutch national coach Dick Advocaat, Dutch press reports said.

Chen Lu, also third in the last two World Championships, performed superbly to overtake France's European champion Surya Bonaly for third spot.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	38 John or Sebastian	4 Kinsman: abbr.	24 Put to work
1 Expensive	41 Fellows	5 "The Red Badge of Courage" author	25 Imogene's costar
5 Half a dance?	42 Claiborne of fashion	6 Basis of bigotry	26 Spacecraft compartment
8 Asparagus features	45 Vicinity	7 Reverence	27 Light brown
12 Wheel-base terminus	46 Banner	8 Last in line	28 Schedule abbr.
13 Unrefined	48 Prevaricator	9 Peruvian of yore	29 Actor Alejandro
14 Celebes	49 The Big Ten Buck-eyes: abbr.	10 Versifier	31 Non-Gentile
15 Risk a collision	50 Hill dwellers	11 Nigerian-born singer	34 Fate
17 On the rocks	51 Settle	16 Suitable	35 Ozawa's implement
18 Qty.	52 Campaign promise subject	20 Luau gunk	37 Boy-friends
19 "A Chorus Line" song	53 Italy's silhouette	21 Bad part	38 Match the last bet
20 Base runner's goal	DOWN	22 Pugilistic play	39 "Turandot" tune
21 Prop for Markham's man	1 Facts	23 Cartographer's creation	40 Noggin
22 Mr.	2 Checkup		41 Small plateau
23 Pondered	3 Dis-mounted		42 Kitchen flooring, for short
26 Monet or Monet	Solution time: 27 mins.		43 Busy with
30 Largest of the seven	ANT ABS DOOM		44 Vivacity
31 Employment	LIED PIC OKRA		46 Stolen: colloq.
32 Cornerstone info	AGRO BAA USED		47 Dr. Frankenstein's work-place
33 Sold	SHRUB SLOB		
35 A Darling child?	BOO PULSES		
36 Gift adornment	SHALALA RETIE		
37 Soap form	HIVE DIG BARN		
	ERODE MOTORED		
	AENEAS PEI		
	ARMY CLOVE		
	WEAL OER EVAN		
	OKIE KAI RENAN		
	KERR ERG NEW		

Yesterday's answer 7-13



CRYPTOQUIP

M U Q K T L Z Y N R A D F U Q P
U L F T Z D K Q L K N Y D
P L N R U M D F N U D N D K
D R Q L K N U Q U Y Z Q ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ELECTRICIAN'S DAUGHTER, AT SCHOOL, IS VERY GOOD AT CURRENT EVENTS.
Today's Cryptoquip clue: T equals P
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.