



Share The Passion



WELL DONE: Romania's Dan Petrescu (L) gets a peck on the cheek from teammate Gheorghe Popescu (C) after he scored the only goal against USA in their final Group A match at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena on Sunday. Romania won 1-0 to qualify for the second round. — AFP photo

Cameroon in utter disarray

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., June 27: The chaos surrounding Cameroon has spilled onto the pitch with goalkeeper Joseph-Antoine Bell pulling out of the team as they prepare for the do-or-die Group B match against Russia on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Cameroon need a victory to have a chance of advancing to the second round after losing 3-0 to Brazil in a drawing Sweden 2-2.

The defeat by Brazil was especially demoralising. "If you lose 3-0, it's like a blow to the head," said their French coach Henri Michel. "But we know what has happened does not matter now. We move on to play the next match and win."

Veteran Roger Milla echoed those remarks. "Brazil are a great side, and it is no disgrace to lose to them," said the 42-year-old, who played the last 27 minutes against Brazil to become the oldest man to play in the World Cup finals.

"But we need to beat Russia to make the second round, and we must concentrate hard to make sure we do."

Bell's announcement was yet another distraction for a side whose squabbles with their federation seem never-ending.

"Given all the team's problems, which seem to centre on me, I no longer wish to continue to be part of the side. My career is over," Bell said.

Now I hope all the traitors hanging around the squad will let them get on with their job in peace.

Earlier in the tournament Bell acted as the spokesman for teammates who threatened to refuse to play against Brazil if they were not paid what the federation had promised.

While the Russians have no chance to advance, having lost to both Brazil and Sweden, Michel was not about to write them off.

"Russia have no chance because they have zero points," he said.

"But it doesn't mean they don't care: They are a proud team and we know they will play as if the game means everything to them."

Michel, who was reluctant to have Milla in the squad, still appears reluctant to use him, though the veteran had

Bell, the African Prometheus

SAN FRANCISCO, June 27: Joseph-Antoine Bell's teammates call him "Mandela" because, like the South African leader, he dared to challenge the established order, reports Reuter.

But Cameroon's seasoned goalkeeper decided at the weekend he had fought enough battles against the politicians.

"I do not want to play any more," he told Reuters by telephone from the team's hotel near the Group B venue at Palo Alto in California.

Bell, first capped nearly 20 years ago but still a widely respected goalkeeper, said Cameroon officials had tried to force coach Henri Michel not

WC, reformer of reforms

HONG KONG, June 27: More people in Hong Kong care about the World Cup than they do about governor Chris Patten's democratic reforms, which come up for approval in the legislative council on Wednesday, a public opinion poll released Friday suggests, reports AFP.

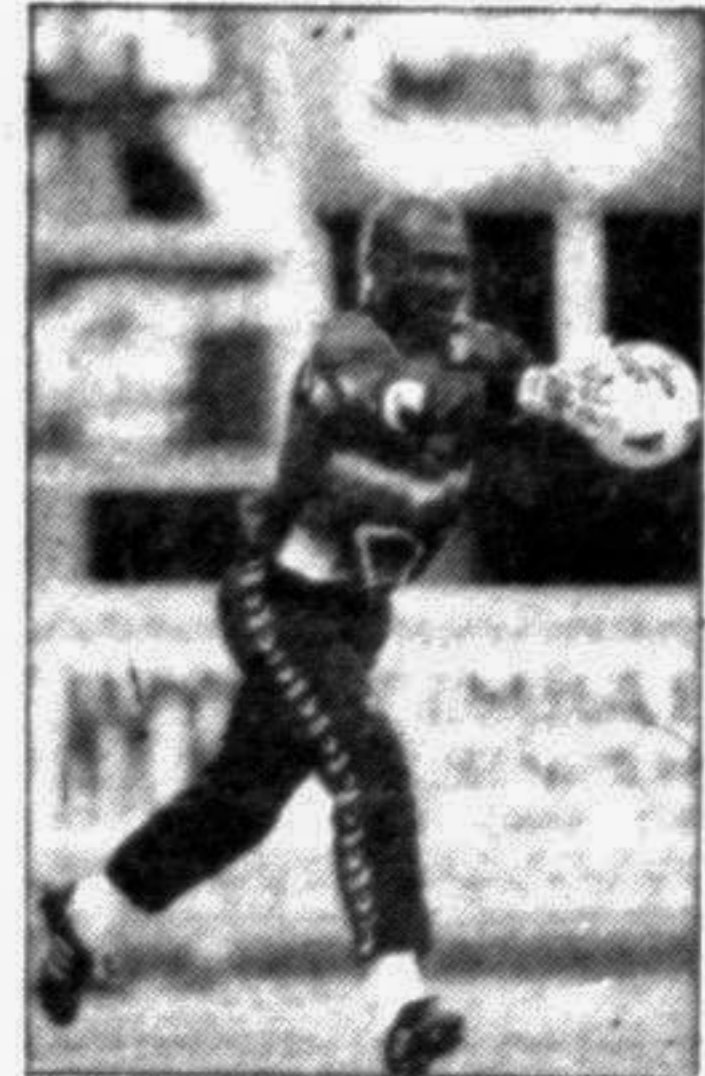
Some 37.2 per cent of respondents to the University of Hong Kong poll said the World Cup concerned them more, compared with 26.9 per cent who put Patten's controversial reforms first.

"The overall observation appears to be that people have lost their interest in constitutional reforms," the university's social science research centre said in a statement.

Another 24.5 per cent told the pollsters they couldn't care less about either the World Cup or the political reforms which enraged Beijing when Patten first announced them in October 1992.

The third and more important phase of the reforms are expected to be adopted — amid considerable debate — by legislators next Wednesday, and would broaden the franchise for 1995 legislative council polls.

But China has vowed to scrap the reforms immediately when it takes back the British colony in 1997, although it has yet to say what electoral system it would put in their place.



JOSEPH BELL

Cameroon's best shot against Brazil.

"Everyone knows what Milla can do, but it did not come off against Brazil," said Michel, who gave no clue as to whether Milla would start.

Michel will have to find a replacement for Rigobert Song, banned for two games after being sent off against Brazil. Song could be replaced by Le Havre's Andre Kana-Biyik, half-brother of striker Francois Omam-Biyik.

Jacques Songo who plays for Metz, is likely to replace Bell in goal.

PROBABLE TEAMS

Cameroon: Jacques Songo; Thomas Libih, Stephen Tataw (capt), Raymond Kalla, Andre Kana-Biyik, Hans Agbo, Emile Mbouh, Louis Mfede, Marc-Vivien Foe, Francois Omam-Biyik, David Embe.

Russia: Dmitri Kharin (capt), Dmitri Kuznetsov, Viktor Onopko, Yuri Nikiforov, Vladislav Tretnevski, Dmitri Khlestov, Alexandr Mostovoy, Alexandr Borodyuk, Dmitri Popov, Dmitri Radchenko, Sergei Yuran.

Referee: Jamal Al Sharif (Syria).

Climbing off the team bus at Cameroon's training centre at Moraga, near Oakland in California, on Wednesday he headed straight for a group of assembled reporters and told them Cameroonians players were ready to strike if they did not receive their money.

That claim was later denied, but Bell's verbal indiscretions raised the ire of politicians back home.

Just hours before the team's second game of the tournament on Friday against Brazil in Palo Alto, coach Michel was ordered to drop his first-choice goalkeeper.

"We all had a meeting before the game and decided we weren't going to let the politicians tell us what to do. We voted that Bell play in the team," said defender Samuel Ekeme.

For the French-based goalkeeper it was a victory of sorts after a long and frustrating struggle with soccer administrators in Cameroon. But he said on Sunday he had quit in the hope the team would now be left in peace.

Speaking out is nothing new to the veteran goalkeeper, who has just ended his career with French club St Etienne. He was sidelined at the last World Cup for criticising team preparations.

Cameroon's "Mandela" is one of several senior internationals who served on FIFA's task force 2000 panel, seeking ways to make the sport more exciting.

With three World Cup finals under his belt, success in African club competition and later in France, Bell is more than qualified.

Bell, who turns 40 in October, won his first cap for Cameroon in 1975 while still with Union Douala, whom he also helped win the African Champions Cup in 1979.

He was twice a winner with Cameroon in the African Nations Cup finals of 1984 and 1986 and a regular with the likes of Marseille, Toulon and St Etienne in the French First Division for the last eight years.

But as he finishes up his career, Bell will probably be better remembered for his stand against authority than his stops in goal.

Soccer has a chance on McEnroe

LONDON, June 27: Former champion John McEnroe may be switching his interest to football, reports AFP.

The American tennis star, who once played on the left-wing for his New York school, says that if soccer takes off in a big way in the United States after the World Cup, he would consider buying a club.

Lara worn out

BIRMINGHAM, England, June 27: World number one batsman Brian Lara, exhausted after scoring 1,423 runs in 10 English county championship innings, is to have talks with Warwickshire over his lengthy absences from the field, reports AFP.

Since making his world record 501 not out three weeks ago, the West Indian test star has been absent through tiredness, stomach upsets, head injuries and even a trip to Heathrow to put his girlfriend on a flight to Trinidad.

Warwickshire chief executive Dennis Amiss said: "He is absolutely exhausted, which has been his main problem."

Dutch swamp S Africans in Trophy hockey

AMSTERDAM, June 27: South Africa found the going tough on their return to international competition when they were thrashed 6-1 by the Netherlands in their opening match at a seven nations tournament on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Dutch captain Marc Delissen provided the pass for Stephen Veen to open the scoring in the 6th minute with Taco Van Den Honert adding a second with a superlative individual effort.

A break away goal for South Africa by Robert Pullen could not halt the Dutch as Floris Jan Bovelander went on to convert three penalty corners and take a fourth from a penalty stroke.

The win was watched by Netherlands Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers who presented 29-year-old Delissen with his 200th cap before the match.

Kamran Ashraf, Pakistan's energetic 19-year-old centre forward, scored a hat-trick in their 6-2 win over Malaysia.

In a masterful exhibition of attacking play orchestrated by inside forwards Shahbaz Ahmed and Tahir Zaman, Pakistan were in complete command with Zaman scoring twice, the second from the penalty spot.

Chiew Chuan Lim scored two consolation goals for Malaysia, both from penalty strokes.

A double score from Paul Lewis helped Australia to a 3-2 win in their opening match against Germany who equalised twice through Sven Meinhardt and Christoph Bechmann after Mark Hager opened the scoring for Australia.

Standings

Standings after the second day of the seven nations Trophy hockey tournament on Sunday:

Table (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points)
Netherlands 2 1 1 0 8 3 3
Pakistan 1 1 0 0 6 2 2
Argentina 1 1 0 0 3 0 2
Australia 1 1 0 0 3 2 2
Germany 2 0 1 1 4 5 1
South Africa 1 0 0 1 1 6 0
Malaysia 2 0 0 2 2 9 0



ON A NEW FRONTIER: Diego Maradona, the charismatic Argentine captain takes a quiet stroll at the Babson College in Wellesley after a practice session on June 26. The writing on the boarding provides a fitting background. — AFP photo

Maradona means business

WELLESLEY, Mass., June 27: Diego Maradona has swept away predictions that he would be a sideshow at this World Cup, reports AP.

So far, the Argentine team captain's flamboyance — backed up by class on the field — has left Romario, Juergen Klinsmann, Roberto Baggio and others trailing in the star sweepstakes.

After two convincing wins for Argentina, Maradona has grabbed centre stage in his fourth World Cup and shown he's still a genius of the game. He's about to break the record for World Cup game appearances.

The 33-year-old midfielder showed his touch of old by slamming in a goal in last Monday's 4-0 thrashing of Greece. Against Nigeria on Saturday, he set up both goals by Claudio Caniggia in Argentina's 2-1 win.

Incredibly for some, Maradona has bounced back from drugs and other controversies to show he's as quick of mind and eye as ever — even if he's lost a step or two to age and put on weight compared to 1986, when he led Argentina

to their second World Cup.

"I'm keeping my promise to play in this championship and to play well," said Maradona, whose World Cup career began in Spain in 1982, followed by Mexico in 1986 and Italy in 1990, when Germany beat Argentina in the final.

"There will always be some who say I'm lacking this or that," Maradona said about Argentine reporters and former players who blasted his presence on the team.

"What do they want? That I score after charging up the length of the field?"

Maradona, who has eight goals in World Cup play, admits he's not the sensational player of earlier years, when he also led Napoli to two Italian league titles.

"I'm a little older. I've played little as of late, because I preferred spending time with my family to training," he said.

Carlos Bilardo, Argentina's coach in 1986 and 1990, was among those who wrote off Maradona after he served a 15-month suspension for drug use.

"But Maradona has returned and he's the greatest because of how hard he's fought for that comeback," he said.

Sampras sails into qtrs

WIMBLEDON, June 27: Top-seeded Pete Sampras, yet to lose a set in four matches, powered into the Wimbledon quarterfinals Monday, and Todd Martin thwarted a comeback bid by former champion Andre Agassi, reports AP.

Michael Chang routed French Open champion Sergi Bruguera in a battle of baseliners, and four American women, led by Martina Navratilova, also charged into the quarterfinals. Navratilova, in her farewell Wimbledon at age 37, crushed Helena Sukova, 6-1, 6-2, slamming an ace on match point to move a step closer to her 10th title.

Sampras crushed Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic, 6-4, 6-1, 7-6 (7-5) in only 87 minutes, the third time the defending champion was able to win in less than an hour and a half.

Martin, the No 6 seed, reached the quarterfinals for the second straight year with a 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (7-0), 4-6, 6-1 victory over Agassi, the No 12 seed. Agassi, who won the title here in 1992, had the crowd on its feet as he took the fourth set, but Martin bore down in the fifth, winning the last game at love.

Chang, a former French Open champion seeded 10th, dominated the eighth-seeded Bruguera, 6-4, 7-6 (9-7), 6-0 to get past the fourth round for the first time in seven Wimbledon.

Chang will play Sampras in the quarterfinals, and Martin will play unseeded Wayne Ferreira of South Africa, who beat Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden, 6-3, 6-7 (7-2), 6-4, 6-3.

American Bryan Shelton, playing his third consecutive five-setter, finally ran out of magic and lost to Swedes Christian Bergstrom, 3-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 10-8. Shelton's only easy match was his first, a straight-sets upset of No 2 seed Michael Stich.

Lori McNeil, who upset women's top seed Steffi Graf in the first round, outlasted Florencia Labat of Argentina, 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-4) to make the quarterfinals here for the first time since 1986.

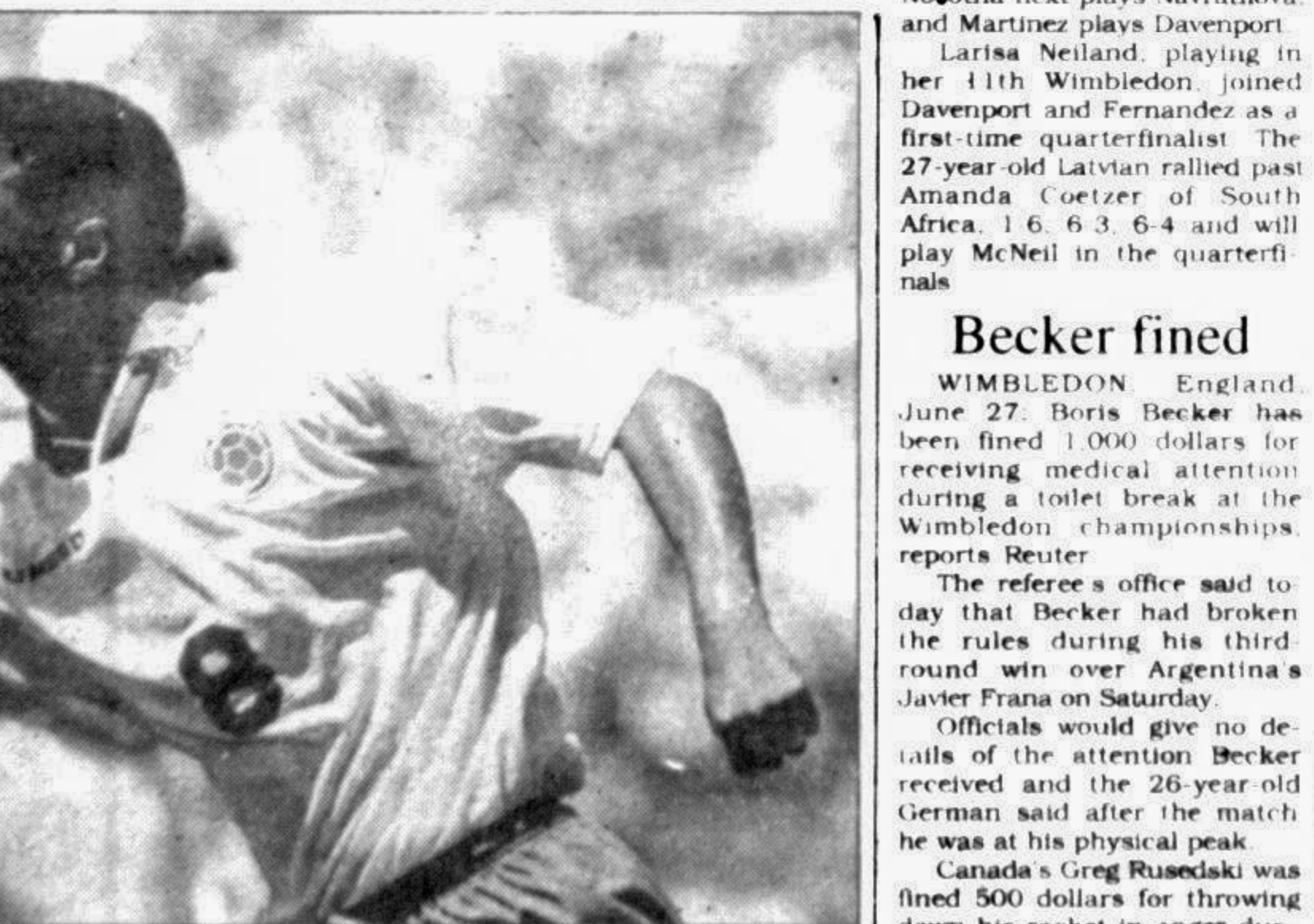
Two other American women reached the quarterfinals for the first time. Ninth-seeded Lindsay Davenport, playing only her second Wimbledon, routed No 10 Gabriela Sabatini, 6-1, 6-3, an veteran Gigi Fernandez, in her 10th try here, beat Yauk Basuki of Indonesia, 6-4, 6-1.

Sampras connected on 77 per cent of his first serves and hammered 18 aces against the 51st-ranked Vacek, raising his four-match total to 89.

In later men's matches, three-time champion Boris Becker faced No 9 seed Andrei Medvedev and France's Guy Forget faced Jeremy Bates, seeking to become the first British man in the quarterfinals since 1973.

Among the women, third-seeded Conchita Martinez beat Kristine Radford of Australia, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, and fifth-seeded Jana Novotna, tearful loser to Graf in last year's final, advanced with a 6-3, 6-3, win over Naoko Swamatsu of Japan. Novotna next plays Navratilova, and Martinez plays Davenport.

Larisa Neiland, playing in her 11th Wimbledon, joined Davenport and Fernandez as a first-time quarterfinalist. The 27-year-old Latvian rallied past Amanda Coetzer of South Africa, 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 and will play McNeil in the quarterfinals.



Colombia's Harold Lozano sprints towards his teammates after netting Colombia's second goal against Switzerland in a Group A match at the Stanford Stadium. — AFP photo

Polls won't affect Pak-SL Test series

COLOMBO, June 27: Pakistan's three-Test cricket tour of Sri Lanka will go ahead despite snap parliamentary elections that will coincide with the series in August, cricket officials here said today, reports AFP.

The second Test is scheduled to begin on August 16, the day of balloting in Sri Lanka to elect a new parliament, six months ahead of schedule. The elections were originally due in February.

Cricket Board officials said deployment of virtually the entire police force for election duty may be a problem in providing security for the match, but they were working on alternative arrangements.

The Pakistan tour starts on July 29 and lasts until August 29.

Dissanayake new SL cricket chief

COLOMBO, June 27: Cabinet Minister Gamini Dissanayake, chosen as Sri Lanka's Cricket Board President on Sunday has pledged to solve problems plaguing the sport, reports Reuter.

"I would like to see a lot of togetherness and a lot of consensus on what must be nationally a non-controversial area," he told reporters.

Dissanayake, who served a previous term as president in the 1980s, was elected uncontested after two candidates withdrew their nominations at the Board's annual general meeting.

He replaces Tyrone Fernando, also a cabinet minister, who quit after serving two terms.

"There has been a disappointment about the levels of performance of the national cricket team. I don't have to say why or give reasons for that. The simple fact is that it has happened. If there is a downward trend one must stabilise it," he said.

Dissanayake is highly regarded as an administrator of the game. He was instrumental in getting Test status for Sri Lanka in the 1980s.

Poor performances in Sri Lankan Test cricket have been attributed to clashes between officials and players and political interference.

Earlier this year, Sri Lanka received a drubbing from India during a tour there — losing all three Tests.

Anura Tennekoon, a former Sri Lankan captain, was made cricket secretary.

New ATP changes afoot

WIMBLEDON, England, June 27: The ATP men's tennis tour has confirmed the adoption of several rule changes designed to speed up play and encourage more crowd involvement, reports AP.

The changes will be phased in over the summer in an effort to help bolster a game struggling to maintain its popularity.

The changes include:

- reducing the amount of time between points from 25 seconds to 20 seconds.
- allowing spectators to spontaneously react during a point as long as it is not intended to distract players.
- Allowing spectators seated above the lowest tier of seats surrounding the court to move freely in and out of the stadium during play, and
- Allowing broadcasters to place microphones on the umpire's side of the court so that conversations between players and officials may be heard.

The changes involving spectators and television will be implemented at ATP events starting July 18. The 20-second rule will take effect Sept. 12. Grand Slam tournaments are exempted.

"We feel these rule changes will make the game more enjoyable for spectators and viewers and will help better convey the excitement of men's tennis," said Mark Miles, the ATP Tour's chief executive officer.

Miles said the Tour Board was considering additional proposals, including the elimination of best-of-five set matches in favour of a best-of-four format with a tiebreaker replacing the fifth set.

Becker fined

WIMBLEDON, England, June 27: Boris Becker has been fined 1,000 dollars for receiving medical attention during a toilet break at the Wimbledon championships, reports Reuter.

The referee's office said today that Becker had broken the rules during his third round win over Argentina's Javier Frana on Saturday.

Officials would give no details of the attention Becker received and the 26-year-old German said after the match he was at his physical peak.

Canada's Greg Rusedski was fined 500 dollars for throwing down his racket in anger during a doubles match on Saturday.