



Share The Passion



Mexicans sure of success

EAST RUTHERFORD, July 4: Surprise group winners Mexico are confident they can overcome suspension-hit Bulgaria on Tuesday to set up a World Cup quarter final with champions Germany, reports Reuters.

"It's true that we prefer playing Bulgaria rather than Nigeria or Argentina but we aren't going to underestimate anyone," said colourful Mexican goalkeeper Jorge Campos.

The two teams met in the 1986 World Cup at the same second round stage, host nation Mexico winning 2-0 before going out on penalties to West Germany in the quarter-finals.

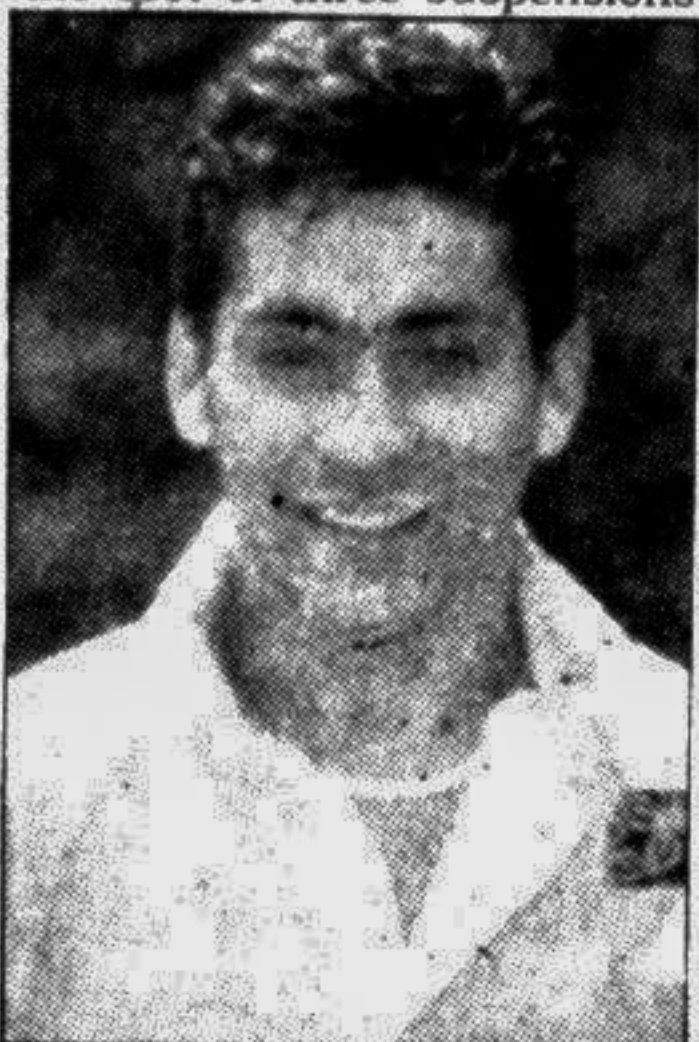
The Mexicans approach the match confidently after recovering from an opening game loss to Norway to head preliminary Group E, which also included Ireland and Italy.

"Why shouldn't we go all the way to the final? We've come through the toughest World Cup group," Campos said.

Bulgaria suffered a 3-0 drubbing by Nigeria in their opening group D match to extend their miserable record in the World Cup finals to played 17, lost 11, drawn six.

But they finally tasted victory by thrashing Greece 4-0 and upset everyone's travel plans when they defeated Argentina 2-0 last Thursday — in the wake of the Diego Maradona doping scandal to clinch second place in the

group. That memorable win over the Argentines was secured at the cost of three suspensions



JORGE CAMPOS

— Trifon Ivanov and Zlatko Yankov picking up their second yellow cards of the tournament while Tzanko Tzvetanov was sent off.

The absence of Ivanov and Tzvetanov leaves coach Dimitar Penev to reshuffle his defence and he is likely to call up the experienced Nikolai Iliev and Ilian Kiryakov to fill in. Daniel Borimirov, dropped after the Nigerian defeat, should replace Yankov in midfield.

Mexico are deprived of the suspended Joaquin Del Olmo in defence and are set to recall Ramon Ramirez in his place. Ramirez starred in Mexico's Copa America campaign last year when his country lost out

in the final to Argentina.

Veteran Mexican striker Hugo Sanchez — famous for the somersaults with which he celebrates his goals — has not been picked for the last two games and coach Miguel Mejia Baron is likely to leave him on the bench again.

Bulgaria have never been past the second round in the World Cup but they have rarely had such a potent attack as formed by Stoitchkov, Emil Kostadinov and the veteran Nasko Sirakov.

"I wouldn't swap them for any other strikers in the world," said Penev after the win over Argentina.

Bulgaria and Mexico last met in January, playing out a 1-1 friendly draw in California, the Bulgarians scored from a penalty conceded after Campos had lost the ball on one of his risky sorties up the field.

PROBABLE TEAMS

MEXICO: 1-Jorge Campos, 2-Jorge Rodriguez, 2-Claudio Suarez, 3-Juan Ramirez Perales, 5-Ramon Ramirez, 4-Ignacio Ambriz, 6-Marcelino Bernal, 8-Alberto Garcia Aspe, 10-Luis Garcia, 11-Zague, 7-Carlos Hermosillo.

BULGARIA: 1-Borislav Mihailov, 2-Emil Kremenlev, 15-Nikolai Iliev, 5-Petar Hubechev, 16-Ilian Kiryakov, 11-Daniel Borimirov, 9-Yordan Lechkov, 20-Krasimir Balakov, 7-Emil Kostadinov, 10-Nasko Sirakov, 8-Hristo Stoitchkov.

Referee: Jamal Al-Sharif (Syria). Kick-off: 2035 GMT.

Escobar's killer arrested

MEDELLIN, Colombia, July 4: Colombian police said Sunday they had captured the man who shot and killed Andres Escobar Saldarriaga, a member of the country's World Cup soccer team, reports Reuters.

General Jairo Antonio Rodriguez, national police head of intelligence, told local radio that the man had confessed to shooting Escobar outside a restaurant in eastern Medellin early Saturday after a heated argument.

"We have concluded for now that the author of the shots was Humberto Munoz Castro," Rodriguez said.

"The identity and participation of the author of the crime has been proven."

Rodriguez said they confiscated a .38 calibre pistol from Castro but only after ballistics tests would they know if it was one of the weapons used to kill Escobar.

Police said they also arrested a suspected accomplice who was not identified and were searching for at least one other man and a woman.

BCCB pulls horns in Sports Reporter

The Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) has formally withdrawn its bid to host the 1997 ICC Trophy, a tournament involving the associate members of the International Cricket Conference, leaving Malaysia and Canada to fight it off.

The ICC settles the issue at Lord's on July 6.

BCCB's decision, taken in a board meeting, chaired by a board president Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, on June 26, came as a sequel to Malaysia's request to help enhance their chances of hosting the meet by staying out.

Meanwhile, a two-member delegation, comprising the two BCCB vice-presidents, Raisuddin Ahmed and Saber Hossain Chowdhury, is now in London to back Malaysia's bid in today's associate members' voting.

Dutch triumph in seven nations' hockey

AMSTERDAM, July 4: A goal from Stephan Veen in the penultimate minute secured a 2-2 draw for the Netherlands against Australia on Sunday in the last match of an important seven nations' hockey tournament, reports Reuters.

The draw gave the Dutch overall victory, a point clear of Australia and two points ahead of Pakistan and Germany who took joint third place.

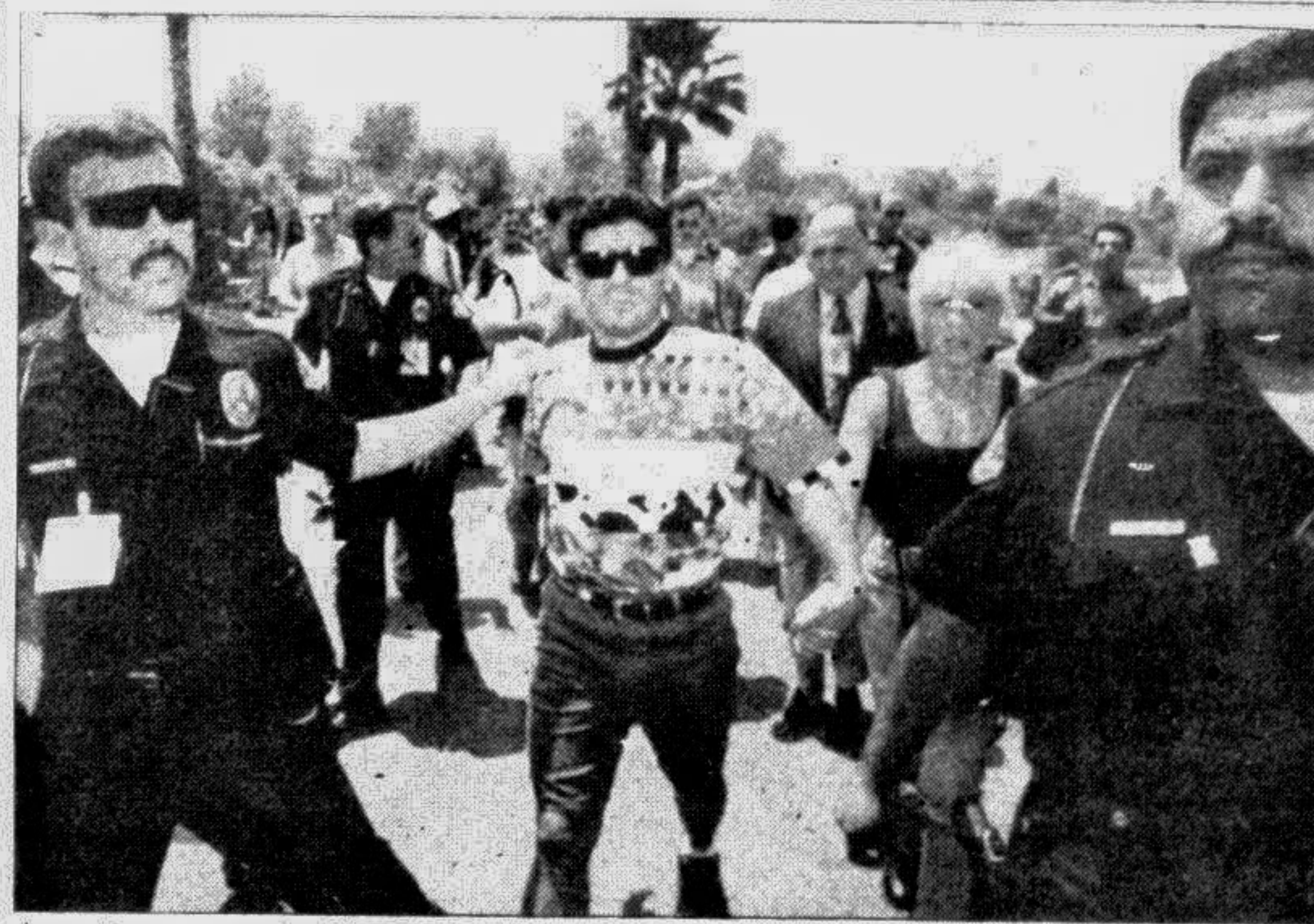
Paul Goudin, the 18-year-old Australian centre half, set up the first goal in the 22nd minute, leaving the simplest of finishes for Mark Hager.

Paul Lewis took advantage of the first of Australia's two penalty corners to increase the lead seven minutes after half-time following a poor clearance from Greg Corbitt's initial attempt.

Floris Jan Bovelander started the Netherlands' recovery with a fine solo goal three minutes later but Australia looked secure right up until Veen's spectacular equaliser.

Damon Diletti in the Australian goal made several outstanding saves from Bovelander and Tavo van Den Honert.

Earlier, Germany foiled Pakistan's ambitions by inflicting a surprise 2-1 defeat on Saturday's 7-2 conquerors of Australia.



Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona and his wife Claudia are escorted by Pasadena police into the Rose Bowl Stadium before the start of the World Cup second round match between Argentina and Romania on Sunday. Maradona is working as a commentator for an Argentine television station.

The piper of egression

PASADENA, Calif., July 4: Like a piper charming children in a fairy tale, Diego Maradona led and Argentina followed.

Argentina were flying high, scoring goals and winning converts. But overnight they lost Maradona — to a failed drug test — and the team soon followed him out of the World Cup as surely as if it were following his lead, reports AP.

One need only look at the scores to grasp what Maradona meant to Alfio Basile's team.

With the controversial No. 10 as playmaker, Argentina won their first two games handsily, by a combined 6-1 score. Without the 33-year-old captain the team lost two games in a row, including Sunday's thrilling 3-2 second-round loss to Romania, which knocked it out of the tournament.

"Diego's absence was terrible, fundamental," said defender Oscar Ruggeri, Maradona's teammate in the championship side of Mexico 1986 and the runners-up in Italy '90.

Argentina had beaten lowly

Greece 4-0 and African champions Nigeria 2-1, with a confident Maradona at the helm of a steady ship.

But only hours after being kicked out for testing positive for ephedrine, a stimulant banned by FIFA, Argentina lost to Bulgaria 2-0 and went from first to third in Group D. The final blow came against the speedy Romanians in the Rose Bowl.

"We're leaving, sadly — but with dignity," Basile said.

Maradona's shadow hovered in the press conference after the final match, when Basile, without naming his star player said: "We started well... winning and putting on a show. But then came the problem you're all familiar with and the team fell apart."

"We had two important absences," Basile said about Maradona and injured striker Claudio Caniggia. "We tried to jump-start the team but it didn't work out."

Maradona watched the last game as a commentator for Argentine television, while Caniggia, who injured his right leg in the second match against Nigeria, cheered the team from the bench.

Maradona scored once against Greece and Caniggia had two goals against Nigeria, with Maradona having started both of those plays.

His replacements for the last two games, Leonardo Rodriguez against Bulgaria and Jose Basualdo against Romania, added nothing to the floundering attack.

"Diego's absence was a very strong blow... It was sad for us to see him crying in pain, to see him pack his bags and leave," said defender Fernando Redondo.

"His mere presence scared our opponents," said goalkeeper Luis Islas, who kept Argentina in the game with several brilliant stops.

"With Diego in there, the Romanians would have thought twice about attacking us so often," he said.

Argentina's elimination could be taken as a failure if one takes into account they had won two of the last four world titles and finished second in another one.

However, such a failure could be explained by the notion that Argentina's fate was decided the day Maradona left.

Once an idol, always an idol

BUENOS AIRES, July 4: Disgraced soccer star Diego Maradona is still the idol of Argentines, despite his forced withdrawal from the World Cup for testing positive for doping, according to an opinion poll published on Sunday, reports Reuters.

Eighty-nine per cent of those polled by the daily newspaper Clarin answered "yes" when asked, "Is Diego still an idol?" with 8.8 per cent answering "No" and 2.2 per cent saying they did not know.

The survey found that 40.8 per cent believed Maradona took ephedrine and related compounds banned by FIFA world soccer's governing body, without realising what he was doing, and 37.2 per cent said he was merely trying to treat a common cold.

Only 13.3 per cent of those polled said he took the drugs as performance-enhancing stimulants, as FIFA ruled on Thursday in suspending him indefinitely from international soccer. The remaining 8.7 per cent said they did not know why he took them.

Separately, President Carlos Menem said he was prepared to intercede with FIFA for a milder punishment for Maradona.

Menem, speaking to reporters at his 64th birthday party on Saturday, said he expected Maradona to call him asking for help and called on the nation to do what they could for him.

"The least Argentines can do for this lad, who is only 33, for his daughter, for his wife, for his parents, is help him overcome his problem," he was quoted by newspapers as saying.

Ref owns up

ZURICH, July 4: Swiss referee Kurt Roethlisberger admitted on Monday he was mistaken in not awarding a penalty to Belgium during their 3-2 World Cup defeat by Germany on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Belgian Football Federation officials have slammed the decision in the 70th minute of the second round match and called on soccer's ruling body FIFA to send Roethlisberger home and ban him from refereeing another international.

In a letter to Swiss tabloid Blick Roethlisberger said that he had watched a recording of the match on television later on Saturday and saw then he had been mistaken in not awarding a penalty after Belgian striker Josip Weber was brought down by German defender Thomas Helmer.

"I decided mistakenly. The Belgians were right to claim a penalty," wrote Roethlisberger, 43 and officiating his second World Cup finals.

"On the field I saw the scene from a distance of about 25 metres. At the crucial moment (German midfielder Andreas Brehme and Helmer blocked my view, I had to decide in a split second. It was an intuitive decision," Roethlisberger added.

He said he was not trying to excuse his mistake.

Ideal blend for Vogts finally

CHICAGO, July 4: It took four games for Bert Vogts to find his ideal lineup, reports AP.

"If we had to play tomorrow, this is the lineup I would field" the German coach said Sunday, referring to his starting 11 in the 3-2 victory over Belgium one day earlier that qualified Germany for the World Cup quarterfinals.

Germany won't have to play tomorrow, however. In fact, they won't have to play until Sunday.

The Germans are enjoying the benefits of a World Cup

system that favours the defending champions and the teams that win their first-round groups.

The Germans have a week to heal their wounds and regroup before they meet in East Rutherford, N.J., the winner of the round of 16 clash between Bulgaria and Mexico.

Vogts held a light workout Sunday for his players and then gave them off until noon Tuesday.

"The long break has its advantages and disadvantages," Vogts said. "The advantage is that we have seven days to get our players to recover from injuries."

"The disadvantage is that we have to find a way to keep up the competitive tension. We'll talk to them individually and in groups," Vogts said.

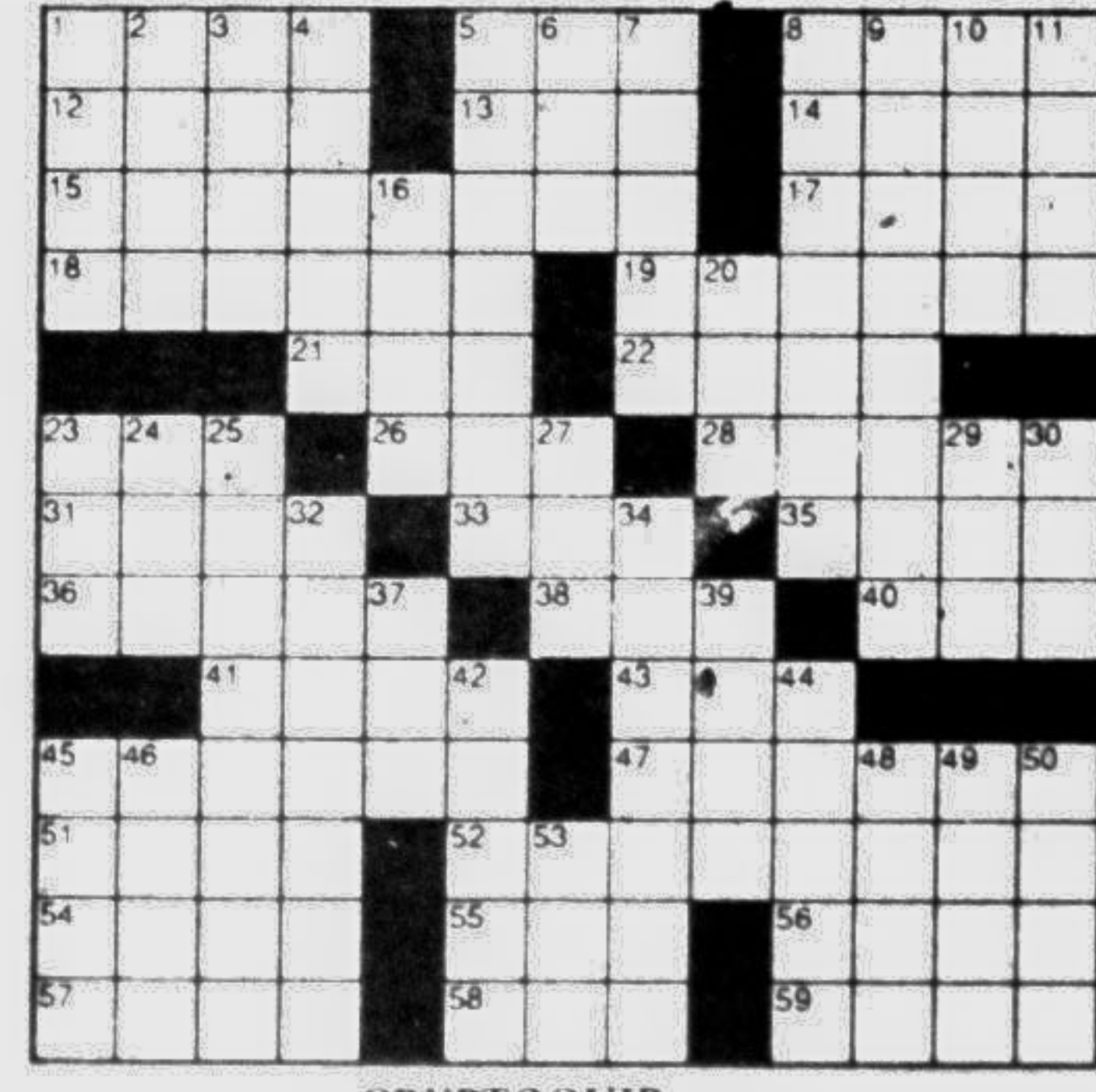
The German coach was forced to reshuffle the lineup he used in earlier games because of the injury to defender Thomas Strunz and the ouster from the team of midfielder Stefan Effenberg.

"We saw an improvement in our team. We had to improve and we did," Vogts said. "We can still improve."

On defence, Vogts brought in speedy Martin Wagner for the slowing 33-year-old veteran Andreas Brehme.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Borscht
5 Church
8 Pack
12 Sesame
13 Brotherly
14 Jason's
15 Sparkles
17 Nuclear
18 Light
19 Indivisible
21 Thither
22 Appear
23 Harvest
26 Wield
28 NBA's
31 Sala
33 Needlefish
35 Authentic
36 Pinnacle
38 Adhesive
40 Tackle a
mogul
41 Conductor
59 On deck
DOWN
1 Pleads
2 Raines or
3 Pianist
4 Tune of
5 German
6 Foul up
7 Winged
8 Wise
9 Tools for
10 Lecher-
ous look
11 Afflictions
16 Disposition
20 Olds-
mobile
23 Switch
24 Vitality
25 Butterfly
27 Stifle
29 Diving bird
30 Wahine's
bestowal
32 Post-
WWII First
34 Dressing
choice
37 Greek H
39 Cripple
42 Debate
44 Satan's
aide
45 The
Georgia
Peach
46 Toast
topper
48 Withered
49 Dinosaur,
briefly
50 Helper,
abbr.
53 Health
plan abbr.



CRYPTOQUIP
Q Z N Y S G J S N ' M V E I E W
K X S , Z X I S N V Z J S M J
S M Q Z Y Z W S , W S B Z G W S W
" V S I S V K E J D B S .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AWARD-WINNING
COOKBOOKS CAN BE WRITTEN ON ONIONSKIN.
Today's Cryptoquip clue: V equals L

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.

11th Asian snooker enters qtr-finals

Dodangoda shocks Kantawang

Sports Reporter

INDIA, Dodangoda sustained the supply of surprises in the 11th Asian snooker championship when the Sri Lankan handed in-form S Kantawang of Thailand his first defeat of the meet on his way to the quarterfinals on the fifth day of the 12 nation championship at the ballroom of the Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Kantawang, who set an Asian record with a break of 139 before setting a winning spree spanning four matches, however, had no problems in finding a place among the last eight.

Dodangoda won the exciting encounter of day's opening session by 4-2 frames, cashing quite conspicuously on "his second break of over a hundred in the fourth frame."

Hong Kong's Chan Kwok Ming did not do anything to raise the sagging spirits of Brunei's Halm, posting a 4-0 win in another tie of the session.

The win took Ming into the last eight in the 25-man meet. Singapore's Fred de Soth, who caused an upset of sorts the previous day by beating Thailand's Preecha Sae, was settled the hash of Mofazzal Hossain of Bangladesh. Hossain, the only player among

the hosts' trio to offer any resistance in the meet, snatched a frame before going down 1-4 to the Singaporean.

Shaken up just in the nick of time by Soh, Preecha Sae Be left S Boteju of Sri Lanka out of the fray with a 4-1 win.

In the second session Yong Kien-Foot of Malaysia maintained his winning form at the cost of Pakistani Farhan Mirza whom he dumped 4-0.

Hong Kong's Chan Kwok Ming blew out a lambent Boteju of Sri Lanka with 4-2 win while Mofazzal Hossain turned up another reesty show before wiling 2-4 to Zhang Guo Min of China.

India's Alok Kumar, trying hard for a passage to the quarters, was leading 3-1 against Filipino Marlon Manalo when reports last came in.

Today, the sixth day of the

tournament, ushers in the quarterfinals of the nine day meet, scheduled to be concluded on July 7.

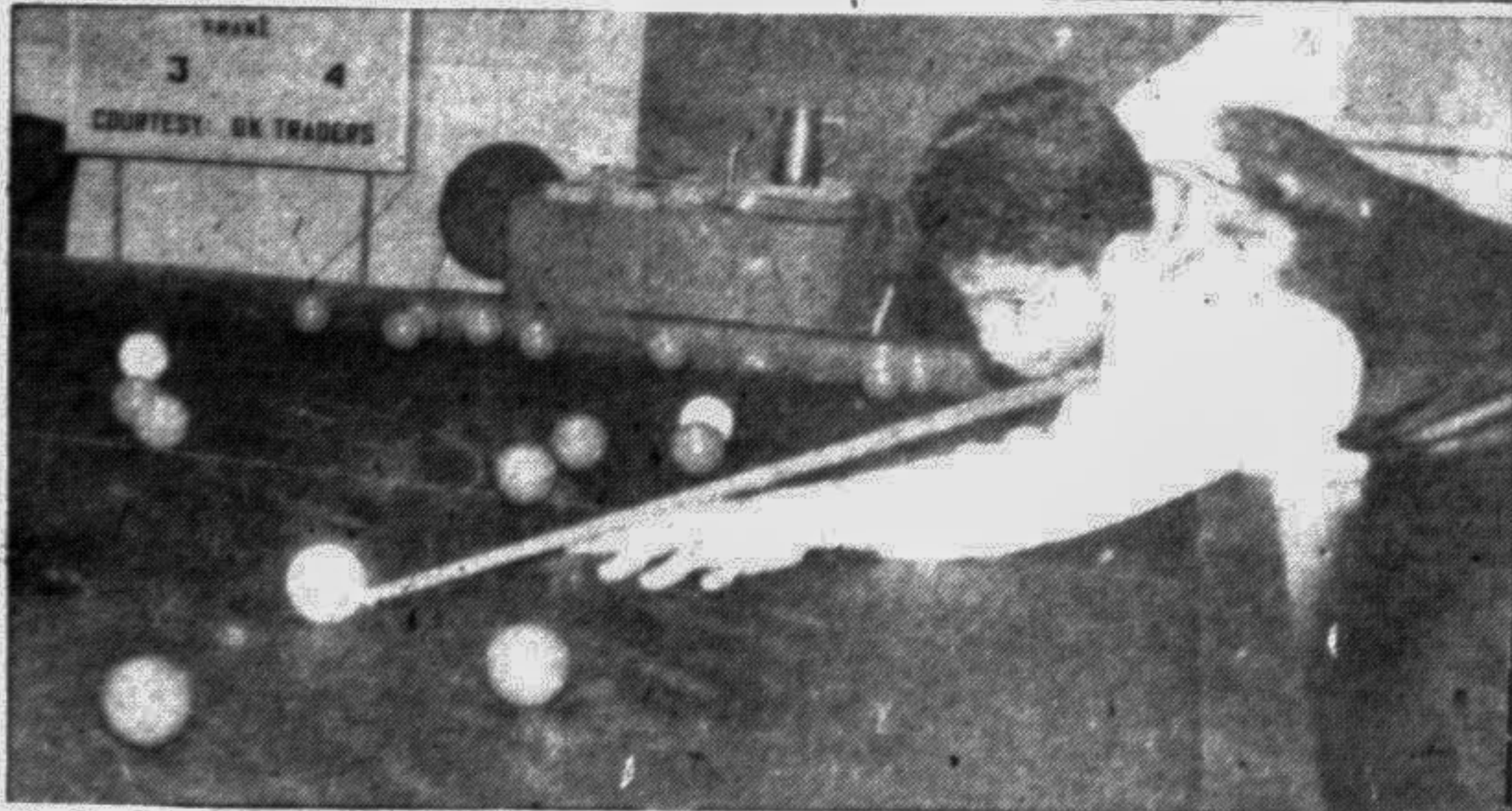
ABSF AGM

Meanwhile the annual general meeting of the Asian Billiards and Snooker Federation was held at the same venue yesterday.

The following office-bearers were elected.

Ali Asghar Vallika of Pakistan and Syed Mahboob of Bangladesh have been elected president and secretary respectively while W Y Chin of Malaysia, who was the only person to be elected through a contest, prevailed over Johnny Chong of Brunei by 9-3 votes for the post of vice-president.

Meanwhile, Mir Shahidullah of Bangladesh has been appointed the ABSF tournament director.



Marlon Manalo, a cueist from the Philippines, is in action against Alok Kumar of India during the second session on the fifth day of the 11th Asian snooker championship at the ballroom of Sheraton Hotel yesterday. Manalo came from behind to snatch a 4-3 win over Kumar to confirm a berth in the last eight.

— Star photo

Lew Hoad dead

LONDON, July 4: Former Australian tennis great Lew Hoad, winner of five Wimbledon titles, has died at the age of 59, reports AP.

The International Tennis Federation said Hoad died in Spain on Sunday night, the same day that Pete Sampras won the Wimbledon title for a second time.