

Navratilova rides into sunset



FAREWELL NAVRATILOVA... tennis legend Martina Navratilova sits on a Harley Davidson motorcycle donated by the Virginia Slims and holds a copy of the banner raised at Madison Square Garden on Nov 15 following her final professional singles match against Gabriela Sabatini. Navratilova lost 6-4, 6-2.

Samaranch in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 16: International Olympic Committee president Juan-Antonio Samaranch arrived in South Africa on Wednesday for a two-day visit that includes a meeting with President Nelson Mandela, reports AFP.

Samaranch's visit was described by an official of the National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA) as a "courtesy call" that is not related to Cape Town's bid to host the 2004 Olympics.

Samaranch flew to Cape Town after arriving at Johannesburg Airport where he will meet Sports Minister Steve Tshwete, the NOCSA official said.

He was expected to use the trip to find out who the South African establishment backed as a new IOC member.

Samaranch surprisingly failed to nominate a new member for the Republic at the IOC session in Paris in August when it was expected he would name NOCSA President Sam Ramsamy. Any proposal would have to be submitted to the next IOC session at Budapest in June.

The IOC president will meet Mandela in Pretoria on Thursday.

WBC bans bouts in California

MEXICO CITY, Nov 16: One of boxing's three major governing groups on Tuesday announced a ban on world title fights in California because of what it termed "racist" measures against illegal immigration recently approved by voters there, reports Reuter.

The World Boxing Council (WBC) will not approve any world title fight in California as of November 22 this year. WBC president Jose Sulaiman told a news conference.

He added that no Mexican boxers would be allowed to take part in professional boxing in that state on pain of WBC sanctions.

The boycott will last until March 30 next year but may be extended if the measures, known as proposition 187 and approved by California voters last week, are still in force.

The voter initiative, which has already been challenged in the courts, would cut off education, welfare and non-emergency health care to California's estimated 1.7 million illegal immigrants. Many of whom are from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Sulaiman, himself a Mexican, said the WBC would ban boxers, promoters and managers who did not heed the boycott for two years.

The Mexico City-based WBC along with the World Boxing Association and the International Boxing Federation are the three main sanctioning bodies for boxing.

Sulaiman said boxers who have already signed contracts to fight in California have one week from Tuesday to register them with the WBC if they wish to avoid sanctions.

The WBC in 1992 lifted a similar boycott against South African which it had maintained for 19 years to protest the then government's apartheid race policies.

"We do not believe it is human to deny a child medical attention or education," Sulaiman said. "What the government of California is doing is the same thing (as South Africa) — racism."

Chinese officials have de-

Becker survives stern test

FRANKFURT, Nov 16: Boris Becker had his home fans on the edge of their seats before clinching a 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 victory over big-serving Croat Goran Ivanisevic in his opening match of the ATP World Championship on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The 7,500 Frankfurt crowd were chanting Becker's name in the manner of soccer fans towards the end of a dramatic match which was decided only in the third-set tie-break.

Becker was born just a short drive from the Festhalle Arena in Leimen and many fans brought banners. One of them read "Boris, give it to the people."

While the match rarely reached great heights in tennis terms, the three-times Wimbledon champion provided drama for his fans before finally grinding down Ivanisevic in one hour and 53 minutes.

The match was the tennis equivalent of fast food, served up hot and at a furious pace. There was little time for the crowd to savour rallies as the tall and powerful players fired in blistering serves on the fast indoor court.

With speeds of up to 200 kph, it was largely one-way traffic as both players struggled to return.

But Becker, who has hit superb form in the last few months after dropping out of the top 10 last year for the first time since he was a teenager, broke Ivanisevic's serve in the eighth game and ran away with the first set 6-3 in 28 minutes.

But from then on in, it was drama all the way.

Ivanisevic, who knocked Becker out of the semifinals of this year's Wimbledon, hit back by breaking Becker's serve to take a 3-1 lead in the second set.

Although former French Open winner Chang produced

another of his stubborn performances, Bruguera kept his nerve on the pressure points to win through in one hour and 41 minutes, his first victory in four matches at the year-end

finals.

Cuban girls underscore supremacy

OSAKA, Japan, Nov 16: World champions Cuba underlined their supremacy in the sport by beating silver medalists Brazil 3-1 to win the world Super Four women's volleyball tournament here Wednesday, reports AFP.

Seeking to avenge their loss in the World Championships final last month at Sao Paulo, the Brazilians showed solid defense to take the first set.

But Mireya Luis and Magaly Carvajal led the Barcelona Olympic champions to take the following three sets, scoring eight consecutive points from 6-5 in the fourth set on their way to an 8-15, 15-13, 15-7 victory.

"I'm very satisfied, because the world's top teams competed in this tournament. Every match was tough and we had to work hard to win a single match," said Cuba's coach George Eugenio after winning all five matches.

Meanwhile, Brazilian coach Bernardo Rezende said: "We played confidently in the first set, but we made mistakes in the second and third. And in the fourth set, we were mentally upset."

"Our team has been improving. We aim to be in the top four in next year's World Cup to make a berth in the Atlanta Olympics," he added.

Russia, bronze winners in Sao Paulo, and hosts Japan were to play in a third-place playoff at the Osaka-Jo Hall.



BORIS BECKER

in the Arena.

"It was getting so noisy it was difficult to play good tennis," Becker said. "They were screaming too early and for a couple of shots it was difficult to focus on the points."

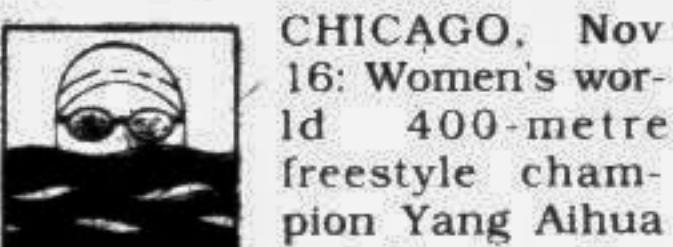
"At the end it was a question of being one point better."

The opening match of the tournament could not have been more different.

French Open champion Sergi Bruguera won an athletic encounter against Michael Chang 7-6, 7-5 in a baseline battle which saw some superb rallies.

Although former French Open winner Chang produced

Yang does China no good



CHICAGO, Nov 16: Women's world 400-metre freestyle champion Yang Aihua tested positive for steroids before the Asian Games, the Chicago Tribune reported today, reports Reuter.

The newspaper, quoting unidentified sources, said Yang was found positive for elevated testosterone levels in random, short-notice testing before October's Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan. That would make her ineligible for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

The newspaper also reported several other women tested at the same time were found to have traces of a variety of steroids in their urine samples. Those tests may not be declared positive because evidence may show that the levels of steroids detected could have been produced naturally by the body, the newspaper said.

China's female swimmers have made tremendous progress in recent years, winning 12 of the 16 events and setting five world records, in the 1994 World Championships in Rome in September.

Their success has promoted allegations from any western coaches and athletes that their achievements are due, at least in part, to the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

Chinese officials have de-

nied the allegations and IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch has said Chinese sports are clean.

But on the last day of the World Championships, coaches and national team directors from 18 western countries, including the United States, signed a petition asking FINA to increase its doping control efforts worldwide.

Neither International Swimming Federation (FINA) president Mustapha Larfaoui of Algeria nor general secretary Cornel Marcusel of Switzerland, could be reached for comment on Tuesday by the newspaper.

Tribune sources said the 17-year-old Yang had tested positive for a high level of testosterone, a male hormone that is classified as an anabolic steroid by international sports officials.

She had a ratio of testosterone-to-epitestosterone of 9-1, while male athletes are regarded as positive for testosterone use if their urine samples show a ratio over 6-1, the sources said.

Sources told the newspaper that 17 Chinese women were among 29 athletes subjected to short-notice testing before the Asian Games. Ten Chinese women were retested a week later, because results of the first tests contained traces of steroid types not usually seen

in doping controls, the sources said.

Yang would be the fifth Chinese female swimmer to have tested positive in the past two years and the fourth found to have used steroids. Only five other swimmers have tested positive in swimming's 22-year history of doping controls.

In addition to being suspended for two years, she would lose her silver medal from the 400-metre freestyle at the Asian Games, the newspaper said. Apparently she would keep her world title because she tested negative in Rome, and positive results are not applied retrospectively.

Jackson gets his chance

NEWARK, NJ, Nov 16: A middleweight who sued the World Boxing Association to regain his title will get a title fight Dec 10 as part of an agreement settling the lawsuit, his lawyer said Tuesday, reports AP.

John David Jackson will also get 110,000 dollars and a guarantee of neutral officials at his bout with Jorge Castro, said lawyer Patrick C English.

The fight will be on the undercard at Monterrey, Mexico, which is topped by Julio Cesar Chavez against Tony Lopez for Chavez's WBC super lightweight title.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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