

Navratilova rides into sunset

NEW YORK, Nov 16: All the flashes of brilliance that stamped Martina Navratilova's career for more than two decades — the darting volleys, the leaping overheads, the chip-and-charge backhands — were on display on last time.

And in the end they just weren't nearly enough.

Navratilova's storied career, 22 years marked by a record 167 singles titles, came to a close with a 6-4, 6-2 loss to Gabriela Sabatini on Tuesday night in the first round of the Virginia Slims Championships, reports AP.

Neither the gift of eight double-faults by Sabatini, nor the nonstop cheers of Navratilova's fans at Madison Square Garden affected the outcome. At 38, she could muster only moments that recalled her greatness, and too often she couldn't reach the perfect lob and sizzling passes of Sabatini.

For the history books, Navratilova's last shot was a backhand that drifted wide of the court.

"I got blown off the court tonight by someone who was playing in another zone," Navratilova said. "If I have to lose my last match to anyone, I'd want to lose it to Gabriela Sabatini because she's a very, very nice human being besides being a hell of a tennis player."

Navratilova began this most emotional night all smiles and ended it, predictably, in tears, flowers in one hand, tissues in the other during the post-match ceremony.

"This is a schizophrenic moment," Navratilova said. "I don't know whether to cry or laugh. I'm ready for my new life."

Navratilova hugged Sabatini at the net when the match ended and was overwhelmed by a ceremony that included a red banner with a yellow tennis ball raised in her honour — the first such tribute at the Garden for any woman and appropriate for the most successful tennis player, man or woman, in history.

A videotape of Navratilova's reminded fans that her career was more than merely victories on court. It was a journey from Communism in Czechoslovakia to freedom in the United States, where she gained American citizenship. Her legacy is not only nine Wimbledon championships, but years of honesty regarding her politics and lesbian lifestyle.

Typically, in her last match, she wore a patch with a red ribbon on her blouse in support of the fight against AIDS. "Most athletes don't get controversial because you don't get endorsements," she said. "It's like taking a cut in pay by being honest."

She defined her own idea of her legacy to sport as "being a consummate professional, giving it everything I had on court and off court, and striving for excellence."

It wasn't all sadness for Navratilova though. She jumped up and down like a kid when she was given a Harley Davidson motorcycle as a going-away gift, the song "Born to Be Wild" blaring as it was rolled out. Navratilova quickly hopped aboard, as if ready to ride off into the sunset.

"It's too early to be relieved," Navratilova said moments later at a news conference. "I'm ticked off about losing. I wanted this week to last. I'm playing good tennis. I could have played some more, but this is the right time for me. I'm glad to go out on my own terms. I'm glad my body didn't give out on me. There were a lot of emotions going on in my head and my heart."

In the end, it was Sabatini's lob and passes that cost her the match.

"I was too busy backpedaling to get emotional until it was match point," Navratilova said. "Then I said, 'Ok, this is it.'"

J-League has to wait, says Ruud Gullit

GENOA, Italy, Nov 16: Dutch star Ruud Gullit says he will play for another three years in Europe before considering an offer to play in Japan, reports AP.

"I've still got lots of things to do here," the 32-year-old said after hearing J-League side Yokohama Flügels were interested in signing him.

The former European footballer-of-the-year rejoined Sampdoria last week in exchange for Alessandro Melli after just nine matches back with European champions AC Milan.

Milan won the European Cup twice during Gullit's earlier spell there but he opted to leave after being left out of the 1993 final they lost to Olympique Marseille.

Last year he scored 16 goals for Sampdoria, his highest in a season, but he failed to make his mark after returning to Milan.

He plays for Sampdoria against Torino on Sunday.



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.

the last point I'll ever play." Asked what she'll miss most, Navratilova said, "playing against the best, playing against champions, that's the treat."

Sabatini was one of those champions and she had mixed emotions about being the player to send Navratilova into retirement.

"On the side I didn't want to be the one to beat her," Sabatini said. "On the other side, I was thinking, well, this is a great honour for me to play Martina in her last tournament."

When they hugged at the

end, Sabatini said, "I'm sorry I won."

It was a night that belonged to Navratilova, and no one else seemed to matter to the crowd. Not No. 1 Steffi Graf, who finished the evening with a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Brenda Schultz, nor No. 4 Jana Novotna, who opened the show with a 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 victory over 17-year-old Iva Majoli.

Novotna's match served as a prelude to the pulsating, standing ovation that greeted Navratilova when she stepped onto the blue carpeted court to play Sabatini after the singing of the national anthem by

Navratilova's friend, Grammy award winner Melissa Etheridge.

Navratilova, wearing Wimbledon white, tried to peak at Etheridge from behind a phalanx of security guards. Then when she strode to mis-court with a smile and a wave to the crowd of 17,131, more than two dozen photographers leaned over the net to get a shot of Navratilova as she began pursuit of one more singles crown. Navratilova responded to the ovation by patting her heart with hand and looking up at her family and friends in the stands.

ACOG's transportation plans

ATLANTA, Nov 16: Atlanta residents during the Olympics will have to put on hold their love affair with the car, a top official of the International Olympic Committee said Tuesday after reviewing the city's 1996 transportation plan, reports AP.

"It will be important for the public at large, in the Atlanta area in particular, to come to

understand there will be a lot of public transportation involved, not very much private transportation, and a good deal of healthy walking," IOC member Richard Pound said.

Long walks in Atlanta's muggy summer heat are not the kind of thing that come immediately to mind in this part of the world, Pound said.

Pound's comments came as an IOC panel, which he heads, completed its twice-yearly review of the city's preparations

for the 1996 Summer Games. He said preparations are on schedule in all areas.

But he noted that the plan to manage transportation during the Games, when millions of people will be in town, will require that Atlanta residents make some drastic changes in their habits.

The plan devised by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games makes extensive use of buses, including 2,000 on loan from other cities. There will be no parking at Olympic venues, but the cost of a bus or train will be included in ticket prices.

ACOG is also urging down town employers to voluntarily alter their business hours to reduce the influx of commuters during rush hours.

"I think you can rely on the people of Atlanta to do that," Pound said. "I mean this is a very, very special event in the history of Atlanta and I think everybody's going to want to make it work and will help to make it work."

Pound said he expects a detailed plan, including such things as where cars are allowed, to be completed within six months.

In other matters, Pound, the IOC representative from Canada, downplayed concerns over the delay in completing a schedule for the 1996 men's marathon.

There has been concern over how to schedule the long-distance race to minimise the effect of Atlanta's hot, humid weather.

The men's marathon is traditionally scheduled on the final day of the Olympics, right before the closing ceremonies. But some have suggested the marathon should be run in the morning.

"What you try to do in the final analysis is not do anything that puts the health of athletes at risk," Pound said. "If something tips the scale one way or the other, that would be it. But at the same time you want as many people as possible to see and experience and enjoy one of the great Olympic events."

Pound predicted the issue will be resolved by next month.



German star Steffi Graf in action against Dutchwoman Brenda Schultz during the Virginia Slims Championships in New York on Nov 15. Graf breezed into the next round with a straight sets 7-5, 6-3 victory.

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 AP.

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 immigrants recently approved by voters there, reports Reuters.

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 Africa 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."

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 Reuters.

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, 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 set a 3-1 lead in the second set.

Amid wild crowd scenes Becker failed to take advantage of four break points in the next game and then missed out on another in the ninth. Ivanisevic finally clinched the set with a firm volley.

Ivanisevic's serving improved as the match progressed, but then lost his touch at a crucial point in the tiebreak, serving a double-fault to give Becker a 6-5 lead. The German finished off the tiebreak 7-5 with a forehand volley to set off wild celebrations in the Arena.



BORIS BECKER

"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

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-ending 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 AP.

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

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 Reuters.

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 Tribune 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 newspapers 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 Marculescu 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-to-1, while male athletes are regarded as positive for testosterone use if their urine samples show a ratio over 6-to-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. But apparently she would keep her world title because she tested negative in Rome, and positive results are not applied retrospectively.

Jackson gets his chance

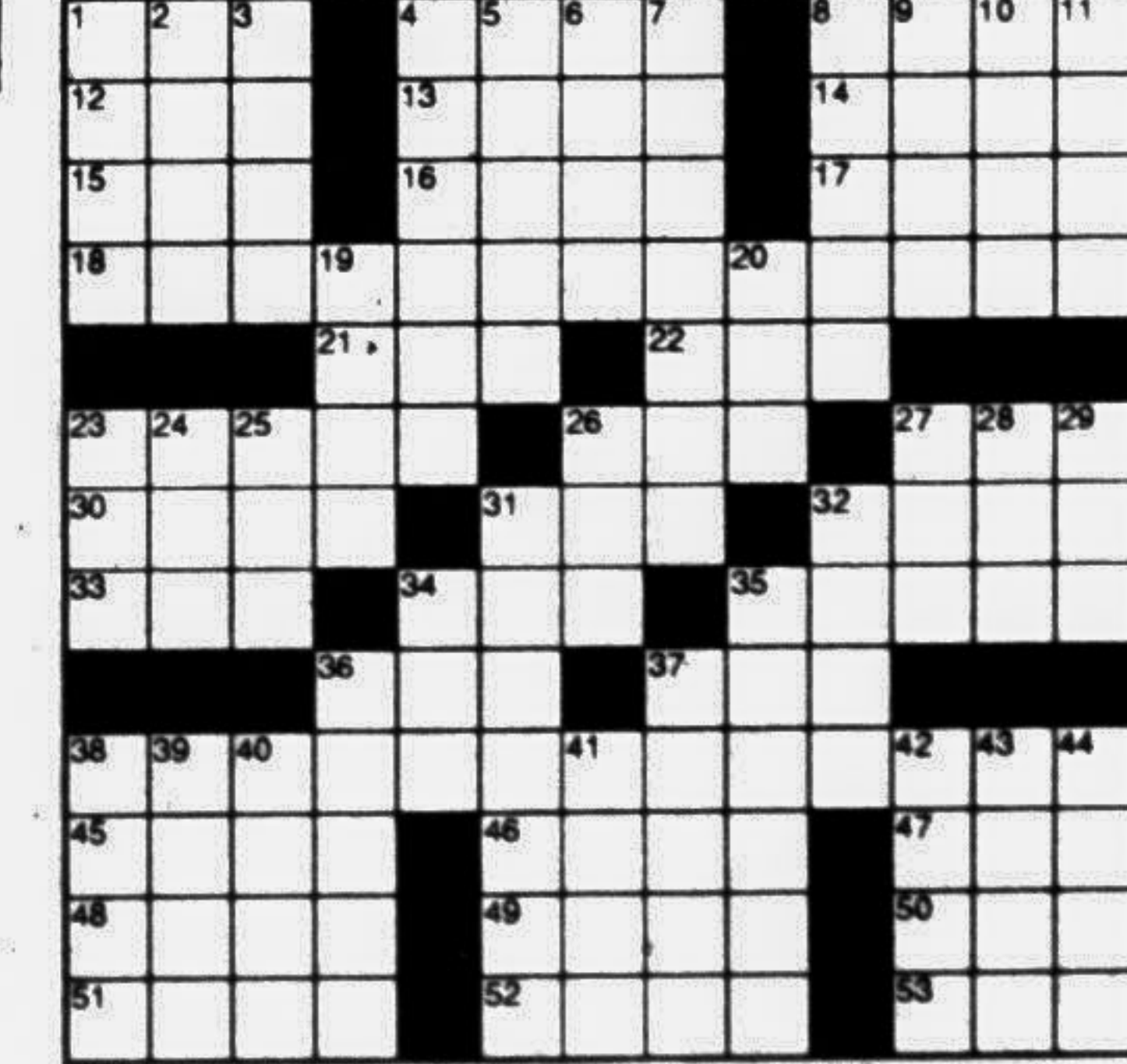
NEWARK, N.J., Nov 16: A middleweight who sued the World Boxing Association to regain his title will get a title fight Dec 10 as part of an agreement settling the lawsuit, his lawyer said Tuesday, reports AP.

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

ACROSS	34 "Got a Secret"	barterer	25 Diana Ross film, with "The"
1 Non-Gentile	35 One of Franklin's certainties	3 Orchestra section	26 About to arrive
4 Police alerts: abbr.	36 Estival quaff	4 Convent bigwig	27 Whammy
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12 "I was saying..."	45 Emcee	6 This and that	29 Not neg.
13 United nations	46 Fashion line	7 Machiavellian	31 Supervise
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17 React to a pun?	50 Dander	11 Neighbor of Mo.	36 Subsequently
18 She played 52 BPOE	51 Stench	19 Row	37 White Cliffs of Dover
Holly Golithly	53 Blue DOWN	20 "Wham!" — Rio	38 Poetic preposition
21 Chowder-head	1 Diner brew	24 Jackie's second	39 Unfinished furniture?
22 French pronoun	2 Birthright		40 European capital
23 "...early light"			41 He got the point across to his son
26 Leaf droplets			42 Elevator name
27 Not square			43 Emanation
30 Actor Estrada			44 Land-owner's paper
31 Belonging to us			
32 Medal earner			
33 Columnist Smith			



CRYPTOQUIP

Y T Z P X G Y T F F Z G T D S Z
G S R P F X M J S Q P G E Y X
G W X J D E C M A T G W X D E A
T Y E C Q R S Q U Y T Y H Y E H
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF RECORDING ENGINEER FINALLY GETS MARRIED, HE'LL PROMISE HIGH FIDELITY.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: Y equals B
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.