

Sport



Seven-time champion Martina Navratilova of the United States and this year's top money earner Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain (R) give a big hand during the presentation of the Virginia Slims Championship trophy to Gabriela Sabatini in New York on Nov 20. The post-match celebration marked the end of the Slims' 25-year involvement in women's tennis. — AFP photo

Maradona plans comeback again

BUENOS AIRES, Nov 22: Diego Maradona on Monday changed his mind and now says he wants to play professional soccer again, reports Reuter.

"I would like to play for Boca [Jrs] in September," when his 15-month suspension for failing a drugs test at the World Cup expires, he told a local radio station.

His interviewer then gave the microphone again to Boca Jrs vice-president Carlos Heller, whom he had just interviewed.

Having Maradona in the team "is a dream all of us have," a surprised Heller said.

After the stiff suspension by soccer's world body FIFA, a depressed Maradona — whose career has been haunted by drugs, violence and scandals — said he was quitting soccer for good.

But last month the fallen superstar was moved close to tears after FIFA announced it was relaxing its penalty to let him coach struggling Deportivo Mandiyu.

And last Saturday, after hearing again the cheers of the crowds when he scored three goals in his second charity match — the only kind he is allowed to play — he said, "This makes one feel like returning."

ATP's top 20

MONACO, Nov 22 (Reuter): Leading men's rankings issued by the ATP tour on Monday:

1. Pete Sampras (US)	5,097 points
2. Andre Agassi (US)	3,249
3. Boris Becker (Germany)	3,237
4. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)	3,007
5. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)	2,936
6. Michael Chang (US)	2,647
7. Stefan Edberg (Sweden)	2,471
8. Alberto Berasategui (Spain)	2,470
9. Michael Stich (Germany)	2,380
10. Todd Martin (US)	2,307
11. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia)	2,174
12. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa)	2,121
13. Jim Courier (US)	1,909
14. Marc Rosset (Switzerland)	1,707
15. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine)	1,655
16. Thomas Muster (Austria)	1,616
17. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands)	1,407
18. Petr Korda (Czech Republic)	1,397
19. Magnus Larsson (Sweden)	1,311
20. Jason Stoltenberg (Australia)	1,288

WTA rankings

ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Nov 22 (Reuter): Final 194 leading women's tennis rankings as issued by the WTA Tour on Monday:

1. Steffi Graf (Germany)	
2. Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (Spain)	
3. Conchita Martinez (Spain)	
4. Jana Novotna (Czech Republic)	
5. Mary Pierce (France)	
6. Lindsay Davenport (US)	
7. Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina)	
8. Martina Navratilova (US)	
9. Kimiko Date (Japan)	
10. Natalia Zvereva (Belarus)	
11. Magdalena Maleeva (Bulgaria)	
12. Anke Huber (Germany)	
13. Iva Majoli (Croatia)	
14. Mary Joe Fernandez (US)	
15. Brenda Schultz (Netherlands)	
16. Amy Frazier (US)	
17. Lori McNeil (US)	
18. Amanda Coetzer (South Africa)	
19. Sabine Hack (Germany)	
20. Ines Gorrochategui (Argentina)	

Renewal of an old rivalry



NEW YORK, Nov 22: One week after she retired, Martina Navratilova has returned with a host of friends, including Chris Evert.

The greatest women's tennis players of the past 25 years announced Monday they are joining with entertainers Barbara Mandrell and Gladys Knight for a 1995 Virginia Slims Legends Tour, reports AP.

"We're concerned," Evert said when asked about the lack of sponsorship for the WTA Tour. "We're fine for next year, but for '96 the pressure's on to come up with a sponsor."

Colonial Mutual Classic to feature top four

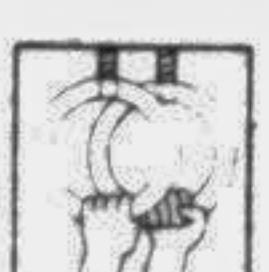
MELBOURNE, Nov 22: Wimbledon champion Pete Sampras, Boris Becker, Stefan Edberg and Michael Stich all will play in an exhibition tennis tournament in Melbourne the week before the Australian Open, reports AP.

Tournament promoter Colin Stubs said Tuesday that he also hopes to sign American Michael Chang and Cedric Pioline of France to complete the field for the eight-man Colonial Mutual Classic, which will be played at Kooyong from Jan 11-14.

The exhibition immediately precedes the Australian Open, which runs from Jan 16-29 at the nearby National Tennis Center.

Stubs said Chang, Pioline and former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash are the three players in contention for the final two invitations.

Homecoming of a champion



BUCHAREST, Nov 22: Nadia Comaneci, the first gymnast to get a perfect 10, came home to a chaotic Romanian welcome on Monday five years to the day after she fled communist rule, reports Reuter.

Police out numbered well-wishers and journalists, forming an impenetrable barrier for the children — many clutching bouquets — who waited in the freezing night for their idol.

"She ran away from a police state and she's coming back to one," said one disappointed Romanian trying to peer between the fur-hatted guards blocking the view of Comaneci.

"Nadia, Nadia, Nadia," chanted a band of children far too young to have seen anything but recordings of the Romanian gymnast's triumph at the Montreal Olympics in 1976.

"I love you all and thanks for

having come to the airport," she gushed at well-wishers. "I returned often from competitions but this return is for me the most emotional one."

Comaneci was just 14 when she won three gold medals and

snatched seven tens — setting a gymnastics record and securing her place in history and as a national hero.

In a country which has had little to cheer about since the Christmas 1989 anti-communist revolution, the visit by the 32-year-old Comaneci has national importance with calls on President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Nicolae Vacaroiu. "Nadia is Romania's top sports performer and her return is a national event," said Sports Minister Nicolae Maresescu who met Comaneci off her Tarom Airlines flight from Frankfurt.

Also on the plane was the victorious Romanian women's gymnastics team — which won its third world title in Darmstadt on Sunday. Still top of the world despite the end of communism the team is far more commercially minded than Comaneci ever dared to be. Last month it went on

seven British positive tests were revealed this summer. One of them, involving 800 metres runner Diane Modahl, who is protesting her innocence, has still to be settled.

Belated birthday party for Harris

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa, Nov 22: All-rounder Chris Harris celebrated his 25th birthday a day late on Monday when he became only the second player to take a first-class hattrick for New Zealand, reports Reuter.

It happened during the Orange Free State first innings on the third day of their four day game at Springbok Park.

But it could not prevent the home side, led by a fine 157 from Rudolf Steyn and half-centuries from Mickey Arthur (83), Hansie Cronje (56) and Kosie Venter (55 not out), from passing the follow-on target of 389.

They set up a last day run-chase by declaring 146 runs in arrears on 392-5.

By the close New Zealand had moved to 140-3 and extended the lead to 286 with Martin Crowe, opening the batting in place of Bryan Young who had a slight groin strain.

With him was Harris whose feat earlier in the day has only been matched for New Zealand by Peter Petherick who launched his brief Test career with a hattrick against Pakistan in 1976.

After Simon Doull had removed Arthur in the fourth over of the day and then ended a 119-run partnership for the second-wicket between Steyn and Cronje by removing Cronje, Harris dismissed Steyn, Louis Wilkinson and Gerhardus Liebenberg with successive deliveries.

Steyn had batted superbly hitting 20 fours before he gave a return catch from the last ball of Harris' sixth over after lunch.

From the first two deliveries of his seventh over, Wilkinson drove straight to Ken Rutherford at short extra cover and Liebenberg flicked a catch to Stephen Fleming at mid-wicket.

Wimbledon makes profit

LONDON, Nov 22: Wimbledon, the world's most famous tennis tournament, made a record profit of 28 million pounds this year, a staggering 70 per cent increase on the previous record of 16.4 million pounds set in 1993, reports AFP.

This is a major boost for British tennis, as all of the surplus given to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for reinvestment in the game in Britain.

Some of the money is intended to add more international tournaments to the domestic calendar, while some will go towards extending the season beyond the traditional summer months.

A strategy to increase the number of tennis centers in Britain will be given greater investment, and it is estimated that by 1997, 40 per cent of the population will live within 20 minutes drive of an indoor centre.

In addition, more experienced coaches will be employed to improve the standards of junior players, and elite training centres are being created round the country.

Five new tournament venues will be opened next year providing a wider range of court surfaces and all-weather facilities than ever before.

Ian Peacock, chief executive of the LTA, said: "We wish to change the general public perception that tennis begins and ends around the time of the Wimbledon Championships."

China hold all the women's

combined weight-lifting world records but those who took part in the Asian Games in Hiroshima last month decided it was to soon the complete in

these championships.

Seventeen year-old Wang Chang and Yun Yanhong won the 46 and 54 kg categories. With 19-year-old Li Fengying missing a possible gold through a mix-up in the 54 kg. Meanwhile convicted rapist Angel Guenchev, allowed out of a Bulgarian prison to take part in the championships, won a bronze medal on Monday.

Guenchev finished third in the 70 kg category behind Fethal Guler of Turkey who set world records in the snatch and jerk at the World Weightlifting Championships in the 59 kg category on Monday, reports Reuter.

Zou won the snatch, jerk and combined gold medals with 220.0 kg in total and left Bulgarian Gergana Kirilova trailing in second place on 202.5.

Zou lifted 98.5 kg to improve the world snatch record of compatriot Chen Xiaomin by half a kg and her 123 in the jerk overtook Chen's 122.5.

But Zou failed at the 125 kg bar in the jerk that would have brought a combined record, as the weights must be divisible by 2.5 kg for the total. Zou's snatch was recorded as 97.5, leaving her equal with Chen's 220.0 kg world record.

Thailand's Suta Khessaporn was third with 197.5 kg total.

Zou was the third Chinese teenager to win gold in the World Championships and it showed again that China has the resources to sweep the board even without their first string lifters.

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The Asia-Oceania Zone Group 1 playoff tie will take place February 3-5 on the grass courts of Calcutta's South Club, the All-India Tennis Association said today.

Indian number one Leander Paes is expected to head the Indian squad.

India tumbled out of the elite 16-team Davis Cup World Group in September when they were defeated 3-2 by South Africa in Jaipur.

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"It was more important to win on the total," Guler said. "I won gold in my own country, I dedicate it to my people."

The top three all used to belong to the same club in Bulgaria.

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Guler, an ethnic Turk from Bulgaria who moved to Turkey a few years ago, said he hoped victory would improve his financial situation.

He said he had to borrow money to prepare for the championships and struggled to look after his unemployed father and mother who was ill. "All I want is a job," he said.

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