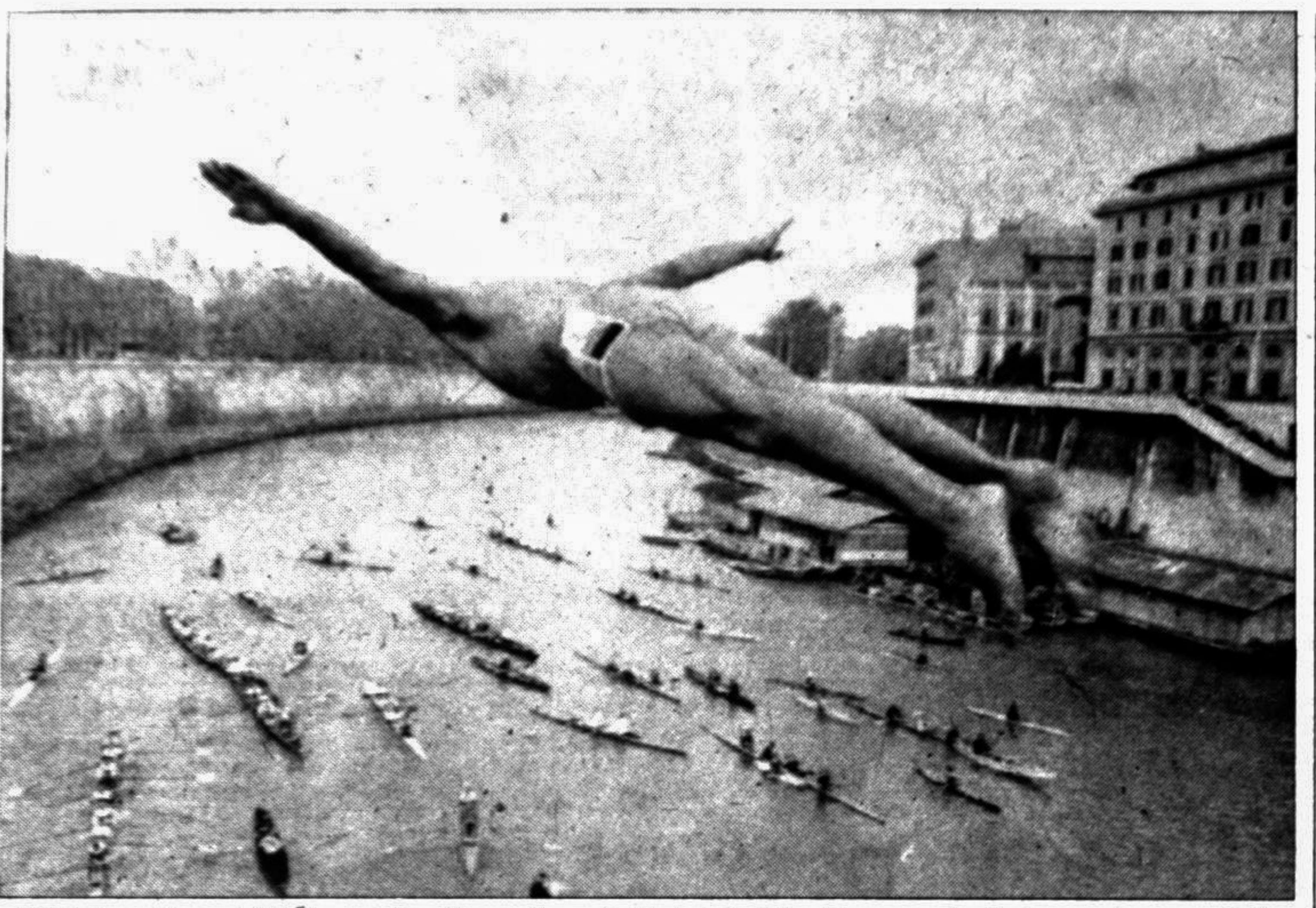


Sport



Swimming enthusiast Aldo Corrieri dives Rome's Cavour Bridge into the Tiber River as rowing boats pass along as part of the city's New Year celebrations.

— AFP photo

Aussie Davis Cup trio advances

ADELAIDE, Jan 2: Australian Davis Cup teammates Patrick Rafter, Richard Fromberg and Jamie Morgan all scored first-round victories Monday at the Australian hardcourt tennis championship, but their veteran compatriot Wally Masur stumbled, reports AP.

After the No. 5 seed, defeated his compatriot Todd Woodbridge 7-6, (7-3), 6-1 after trailing 1-3 in the first set, while Fromberg downed American Jonathan Stark 6-4, 6-2 and Morgan beat Byron Black of Zimbabwe 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 on the Rebound Ace courts at the Memorial Drive Arena.

"I started off a little rusty and was happy to get a win in my first match of the year," said Rafter.

German left-hander Carl-Uwe Steeb beat Masur 6-4, 7-6 (7-5).

Masur, a veteran Davis Cup team member, was ranked 16th in the world late in 1993 but has slumped to 136th. He had to ask for a wild card entry into the event after being sidelined with an Achilles tendon injury.

Foreman to defend his crown in April

NEW YORK, Jan 2: World heavyweight champion George Foreman will defend his titles at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, the New York Daily News reported, says AFP.

Foreman, who will be 46-year-old on January 10, is to fight Germany's Axel Schulz on April 22 or April 29.

Foreman and Louisiana governor Edwin Edwards said in December that Foreman would defend his title at the Superdome.

Promoter Bob Arum said the list of possible opponents included Schulz, Brian Nielsen, Lou Savarese, Alexa Garcia and Joe Hipp.

Schulz, 26, would be only the third German to challenge for the heavyweight crown. The last was Karl Mildenberger, who lost to Muhammad Ali in 1966. The only German to hold the world heavyweight title was Max Schmeling.

Foreman knocked out Michael Moorer in the 10th round on November 5 to win the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation titles.

He will be giving away 20 years to Schulz, whose last fight was a 10-round decision over former World Boxing Association champ James Bonner Smith.



Ivanisevic may skip Aussie Open

PERTH, Jan 2: Big-serving Croatian Goran Ivanisevic could miss the Australian Open tennis championship later this month after suffering a knee injury during an exhibition match, officials said Monday, reports AP.

Ivanisevic hobbled from the court with pain in his right knee after playing only three games of an exhibition against Mark Petchey of Britain at the Hopman Cup teams event on Sunday night.

"It's too early to jump to conclusions, but it would be an understatement to say that Goran's Australian Open plans are under threat," said Paul McNamee, who is tournament director for both the Hopman Cup and the Australian Open.

Ivanisevic played the exhibition match at the Burswood Dome after a suspension ruled him out of competing in the Hopman Cup.

The two-time Wimbledon singles finalist had been paired with Iva Majoli on the Croatian team for the Hopman Cup, but was suspended in November after exceeding the ATP Tour's limit of fines for the year.

The ban also put him out of next week's New South Wales Open in Sydney, where he was to have been the top seed.

"Goran didn't have any movement in the leg," said Ivanisevic's Australian coach Bob Brett. "He responded well to treatment overnight, but will undergo tests on Tuesday as a precaution.

"It is a little too early to say just how serious a problem it might be."

Ivanisevic was playing against Petchey to help him stay in shape for the Australian Open, which begins Jan 16 in Melbourne. He was troubled by a cartilage injury in the same knee last May.

Ivanisevic watched matches Monday at the Hopman Cup, but declined to comment on his injury.

Muller's 2nd

LAKE PLACID, NY, Jan 2: Risto Jussilainen of Finland tied a hill record with a 95-metre ski jump Sunday, but Knut Muller of Norway led the first round and ignored fluffy snow to win for the second straight day at the Intercontinental Cup, reports AP.

Muller, who won the large hill event Saturday at the Adirondack Bank NYCE New Year's ski jump meet, went 93 and 94.5 metres Sunday for 249.5 points. Jussilainen, long on distance but not as stylish in the eyes of the five judges, went 93 and 95 metres for 246.5 in the normal hill event.

Finnish teammates Vesa Hakala and Olli Happonen were third and fourth while Austria's Christian Samitz completed the top-five skiers. Teenager Randy Weber of the United States, third Saturday, was the top American finisher for the second straight day in sixth place.

Tad Langlois of the United States, was eighth with Casey Colby, also of the United States, 10th in the field of 45 at the newly refurbished Olympic Jumping Complex.

In ski jumping, five judges grade a jump, including the landing. The high and the low are thrown out and the idle three kept; although Jussilainen went farther than Muller, judges felt his form was less stylish.

Jussilainen tied the hill distance record set a year ago when American Ryan Heckman went 95 metres to win the 1994 Adirondack Bank NYCE meet.

Mississippi State scored on its first three possessions and the Wolfpack on the first two.

Varro in final

POR WASHINGTON, NY, Jan 2: Top-seeded Kornelia Varro of Hungary outlasted unseeded Keiko Tokuda of the United States 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 Friday to gain the girls 16 final in the Port Washington international championships, reports AP.

Varro will oppose Min-Lee Nam of Korea, who stopped Agnes Wiski of the United States 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

In the Boys 16 semifinals, No 1 Luka Kutangac of Croatia defeated Hyo-Jae Nam of Korea 6-3, 6-4 and Ratko Mladenovic of Yugoslavia was a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Eric Scharf of the United States.

Top-seeded Aleysa Ignatova of Belarus won the Girls 14 title with a 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 victory over No 2 Tamar Keren of Israel, while unseeded Marjan Lasic of Yugoslavia surprised No 7 Rali Zidkiyahu of Israel 6-1, 6-2 for the Boys 14 crown.

No 13 Bruce Li of the United States was a 6-2, 6-2 winner over Michael Passarella of the United States in the Boys 18 quarterfinals. In the Girls 18 quarters, No 8 Petre Russegger of Austria routed Michele Martaus of the United States 6-0, 6-1 and Brooke Herman of the United States overtook Milena Stosanovic of Yugoslavia 4-6, 6-1, 6-3.

China looks for new system

BELJING, Jan 2: For decades the transition from a planned economy to a market economy in China, he said. "Players all used to eat government rice... but many left China to go elsewhere."

China will encourage and develop the private club system and organise more competitions with cash prizes at all levels, Yao said.

The system was designed to redress a shortage of top-class, new generation players by drawing on what Yao said was plentiful potential talent.

While the overall quality of Chinese table tennis has not deteriorated, the departure of many top players and the rise in popularity of other sports has left China less well-equipped to face the huge improvement of European players, association officials said.

To boost interest, China last July introduced a "two track system" of official and private table tennis. Yao Zhenxu, vice-secretary of the China Table Tennis Association explained.

The system gives players "dual identity," allowing them to represent both official teams and private clubs and thus to earn more without having to desert the official system which trained them, Yao said.

Europeans took all the medals at the men's World Cup in Taiwan earlier this month. In addition, there are only two Chinese men in top 10 world rankings and the reigning men's world champion in

"The changes reflect the transition from a planned economy to a market economy in China," he said. "Players all used to eat government rice... but many left China to go elsewhere."

"Now we are involved in lots of competitions, so ordinary people can choose from many different sports. Table tennis is less popular than before."

Officials hope companies and individuals will fund at least 10 private table-tennis clubs nationwide. Registration of new clubs will be completed by March, Yao said.

The state will continue to provide training schools for young players. Better opportunities within China should prevent players moving abroad, Yao said.

Last October, many Chinese were shocked when Chire Koyama of Japan beat Chinese champion Deng Yaping to take gold at the Asian Games in Hiroshima. Koyama is a former Chinese world champion who married a Japanese and emigrated after losing her place in the Chinese team for refusing to throw a game.

"It is not possible for a single country to completely dominate a sport for a long time," Yao said. "We presently hold four of the seven World Championship titles. In the men's doubles, women's doubles, mixed doubles and women's team events."

"If we don't win at least three or four of the titles at the World Championships in China's northern city of Tianjin next year, we would be unable to face our people."

Indonesian Open results

JAKARTA, Jan 2: South Korean Park Sung-Hee, seeded 14th, defeated Indonesian teenager Natalia Soetrino 6-1, 6-3 Monday in the first round of the Indonesian Open women's tennis tournament, reports AP.

Park, ranked 101st by the Women's Tennis Association, was the highest seed in action on the opening day of the 161-250 tournament.

In another match on the hard courts of Jakarta's Senayan tennis court, Indonesia's No 2 player, Romana Tedjakusumah, needed just one hour to oust Kim de Weille of the Netherlands 6-2, 6-0.

TEL the trouble

PERTH, Jan 2: Tennis' latest experiment with electronic line-judging gave officials an early headache today as Austria beat Argentina 2-1 in the first round of the Hopman Cup, reports Reuter.

The system, in use for the second year at the mixed team tournament, worked perfectly in the opening women's singles as Judith Wiesner downed Ines Gorrochategui in straight sets.

But unexpected bleeps from the machine interrupted both sets of Horst Skof's 6-1, 6-4 victory over Javier Frana, reviving memories of 12 months ago when Frenchman Cedric Pioline's unusual racket threw the system into confusion.

Skof, in particular, was irritated, but tournament director Paul McNamee insisted the cause was merely a "sticky" handset and an umpire with little experience of the equipment.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35	Unhearing
1	Blood-	37 Excellent
2	hound's	39 AAA job
3	trail	41 Drudge
4	5 "Lorenzo's	42 "Sophie's
5	—	Choice"
6	Rudimen-	author
7	tary	45 Its capital
8	learning	is Kigali
9	12 Fancy	49 Lightweight
10	fabric	outerwear
11	13 Dos Pas-	51 No stay-
12	sos trilogy	at-home
13	14 Under-	52 Malaria
14	stand,	symptom
15	sci-fi style	53 Sample
16	15 Small drink	the sherry
17	16 Likely to	54 Tied
18	fall over	55 Low
19	18 Doggie-	56 Attention
20	bag fill	getter
21	Burns a bit	57 Steak-
22	21 Gallery's	house
23	cries	request
24	22 Session:	Solution time: 26 min.
25	abbr.	
26	Buns of a	
27	sort	
28	Poet	
29	Teasdale	
30	31 Pussycat's	
31	co-	
32	passenger	
33	Doughnut,	
34	geometrically	
35	36 Scale	
36	members	

LEAPS	CATONA
MEADOW	OLIVER
GIRDLE	CINEMA
MALE	ABHAB
DATA	ROB
HERS	ICH
PEAK	
TRAP	
SHUL	
DEY	
RYE	
ERIC	
ALD	
CORN	
AMOY	
BURTON	
ETOILE	
TEPEES	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13					14	
15				16				17		
18				19				20		
21							22	23		
24	25	26					27	28	29	30
31				32			33	34		
35		36	37				38			
39		40					41			
42	43				44	45		46	47	48
49					50		51			
52					53		54			
55					56		57	</td		