

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.

Rafter, 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 title at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, the New York Daily News reported, says AP.

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 Bonerush Smith.



Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (L) is congratulated by Minister for Sports Pele during Cardoso's inauguration ceremony in Brasilia on Jan 1. — AFP photo

Ukraine knock Sweden out

PERTH, Jan 2: Brother-sister combination Andrei Medvedev and Natalia Medvedeva teamed to score a mixed doubles victory Monday that lifted fifth-seeded Ukraine to a 2-1 victory over Sweden in the first round of the Hopman Cup tennis championship, reports AP.

Medvedev and Medvedeva downed Mats Wilander and Asa Carlsson 6-2, 6-2 in just 57 minutes to clinch the contest after veteran Wilander had scored a shock victory over Medvedev in the men's singles.

"The mixed is our family favourite event, and that's why we do so well," said Medvedeva.

Wilander looked in dire straits when he trailed 2-6 and a break against Medvedev in the singles before winning six straight games and completely changing the pattern of the match, winning 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 in just under two hours.

The result was a major surprise. Medvedev is ranked 15th in the world and former world No. 1 Wilander is now 127th.

As soon as Wilander began to increase the pressure, Medvedev began making a stream of errors and became increasingly frustrated.

"He relaxed and thought it was over and I relaxed and thought it was over," Wilander said. "That worked in my favour."

I felt in control at the end and it was a good feeling to pull one out.

Medvedeva earlier took two hours, 33 minutes to down 19-year-old Carlsson 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 7-5 in the women's singles.

Despite being troubled by stomach cramps in the final two sets, she won five games in a row from 4-5 down in the second.

Carlsson had two break points for a 5-3 lead in the final set but Medvedeva held on. She broke for a 6-5 lead when she moved Carlsson wide and

forced a forehand error and then held serve for the match.

"It was hard, but it was my first match of the year and I didn't want to default," Medvedeva said.

The Netherlands was to face France in another first-round match later Monday.

Ukraine next will play the fourth-seeded United States team of Richey Reneberg and Lindsay Davenport in the quarterfinals on Tuesday.

Davenport, who rose to No. 6 in the world last year and made the final of the Virginia Slims Championships in New York, is being coached for the first time at the Hopman Cup by Craig Kardon, a former coach of Martina Navratilova.

The four top-seeded teams: the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain and the United States, all received first round byes in the 12-nation tournament, which continues through Jan. 7 and offers a first prize of US \$154,000 to the winning pair.

Carolina squeeze home

ATLANTA, Jan 2: Terry Harvey passed for one touch-down and set up another just over three minutes later with a 62-yard completion as No. 23 North Carolina State rallied to beat Mississippi State 28-24 in the Peach Bowl on Sunday night, reports AP.

Harvey connected with Dallas Dickerson on a 3-yard scoring pass with 1:12 left in the third quarter and then ran for a 2-point conversion that tied the game at 21.

After State failed to get a first down, Harvey took the Wolfpack (9-3) 60 yards in four plays, with Carlos King getting the final 11 yards with 13:06 to play. The key play in the drive was Harvey's 62-yard pass to Jimmy Grissett to the Mississippi State 13.

Grissett made the catch at the Bulldogs 46 between defenders, who collided, allowing Grissett to race away before being knocked out of bounds by Clay Mack.

Mississippi State (8-4) reached the Wolfpack 28 in the closing minutes, but couldn't overcome a 15-yard penalty for an offensive face mask violation.

The bulldogs, a one-touch-down favourite, had numerous opportunities to take control, but had to settle for five field goals by Tim Rogers, covering 37, 21, 29, 36 and 30 yards.

Mississippi State broke a 13-13 halftime tie early in the third quarter when Andre

Bennett blocked Chad Robson's punt from the Wolfpack 39. The ball ended up in the end zone where Robson

Avalanches kill five in France

GRENOBLE, France, Jan 2: Five skiers died in avalanches in the French Alps during the New Year weekend, rescue services said on Sunday, reports Reuters.

Two Frenchmen, a German, a Swede and a British woman died in separate accidents as heavy snow, wind and swings in temperature contributed to make the snow unstable.

Several other skiers were injured in the accidents, at the resorts of Val d'Isere, Les Arcs, Chamonix, La Plagne and Tignes.

Rescue services named the British woman, buried by an avalanche in Tignes on Saturday, as Amanda Smith, aged 30, from London.

The Swede, hit by an avalanche apparently set off by skiers further up the mountainside in Val d'Isere on Sunday, was identified as Richard Olof-Holger, 24.

One of the French dead was an experienced 47-year-old ski guide, Richard Bozon, who was buried under two metres (six feet) of snow in Chamonix. Names of the other two were not available.

fought off Bulldogs defenders for the recovery that gave the Mississippians a safety.

Keller McGee's 50-yard return with the free kick to the 15 was wasted, with Mississippi State settling for a field goal. Four plays later, Larry Williams sacked Harvey forced and recovered a fumble at the NC State 21. Once again, the Bulldogs had to settle for a field goal and a 21-13 lead with 8:36 left in the period.

Harvey then engineered the scoring drives of 69 and 80 yards that lifted the Wolfpack to victory. Harvey had a 13-yard run on a third-and-nine play at the Mississippi State 18 three plays before finding Dickerson in the left side of the end zone for the touch-down.

The Bulldogs cut the lead to 28-24 with 4:47 left on Rogers' fifth field goal that came after Robert Isaac had downed Andy Russ' punt on the NC State 1 and gained possession after a Pack punt at the 33.

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

Varro in final

PORT WASHINGTON, N.Y., 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 championship, 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 Kutagac of Croatia defeated Hyo-Jae Nam of Korea 6-3, 6-4 and Ratiko Madjenovic of Yugoslavia was a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Eric Scharf of the United States.

Top-seeded Aleysa Ignatieva 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 Lacic of Yugoslavia surprised No. 7 Rafi 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 Pasarella of the United States in the Boys 18 quarterfinals. In the Girls 18 quarters, No. 8 Petra Russeger of Austria routed Michele Martaus of the United States 6-0, 6-1 and Brooke Herman of the United States overtook Milena Stosanova of Yugoslavia 4-6, 6-1, 6-3.

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 to 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, N.Y., 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 middle 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.

China looks for new system

BEIJING, Jan 2: For decades the undisputed giant of world table tennis, China plans to tap private enterprise to encourage new players and stem the erosion of its edge in international competition, officials say, reports Reuters.

"The situation at the top level is not bad," Li Furong, vice-chairman of the China Table Tennis Association, said in a telephone interview. "But there are too few top-class young competitors."

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.

"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."

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.

For example, the women's national team remains strong but there are too few young women coming along, he said.

The current men's team was stronger than it had been for some time and there was even a chance China could win back the men's individual or team world titles for the first time in three years, Yao said.

China dominated world table tennis in the 1970s and 1980s, but in recent years Europeans — often helped by Chinese trainers — have been increasingly successful.

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

French. "In the 1960s, table tennis was the only sport in which China competed with the outside world... so that level of interest was very high," Li said.

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

The objective of the reforms is to give more people the chance to participate in table tennis, he said.

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 teen-ager Natalia Soetrisno 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 dlr's 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's 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 Reuters.

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 Skoff'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.

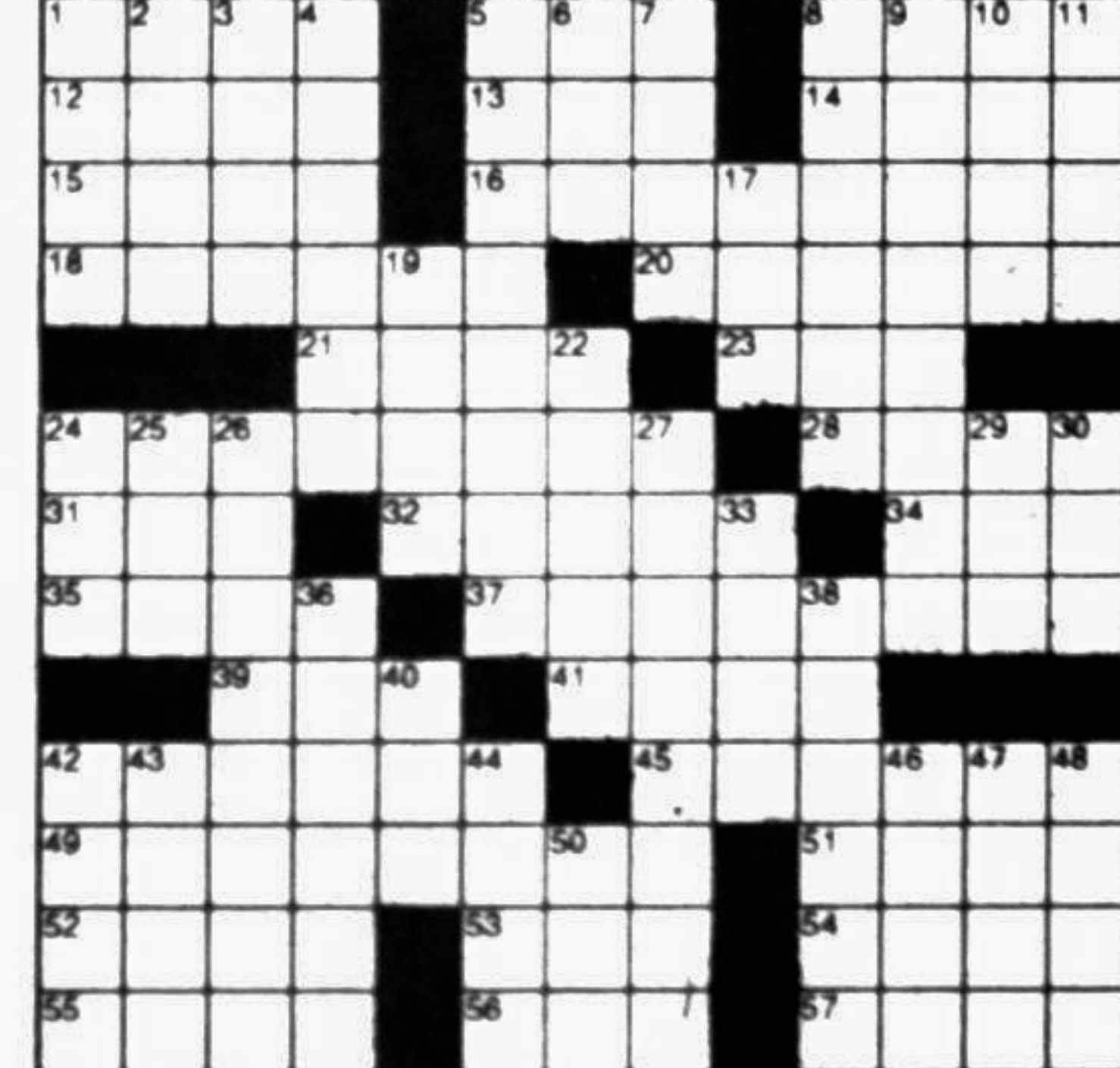
Skoff, in particular, was irritated, but tournament director Paul McNamee insisted the cause was merely a "sticky" handset and an umpire with little experience of the equipment.



Jumping for joy in the shadow of Big Ben, some 1,500 cheerleaders from the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) of America take part in London's New Year parade. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS
- 1 Blood-hound's trail
  - 5 "Lorenzo's"
  - 8 Rudimentary learning
  - 12 Fancy fabric
  - 13 Dos Passos trilogy
  - 14 Under-stand, sci-fi style
  - 15 Small drink
  - 16 Likely to fall over
  - 18 Doggie-bag fill
  - 20 Burns a bit
  - 21 Gallery's cries
  - 23 Session: abbr.
  - 24 Buns of a sort
  - 28 Poet
  - 31 Pussy-cat's co-passenger
  - 32 Doughnut, geometrically
  - 34 Scale members
- DOWN
- 1 Automaker
  - 2 Jeanne —
  - 3 His work was in tents
  - 4 Comment
  - 5 Defeat at marks-manship
  - 6 Equi-
  - 7 Runs around
  - 8 Smart co-workers?
  - 9 He puts his feet in his mouth
  - 10 Inlet
  - 11 "The — the limit"
  - 17 Yon bloke
  - 19 Get your Solution time: 26 min.
- second wind
- 22 Barber-chair attachment
  - 24 Bushy clump
  - 25 Be in the red
  - 26 Odd-looking Australian beast
  - 27 007, e.g.
  - 29 Fun 'n' games, for short
  - 30 Firewood?
  - 33 February forecast
  - 36 Military strength
  - 38 Ass
  - 40 Court
  - 42 Impale
  - 43 Frat-party garb
  - 44 Poetic
  - 46 PBS science series
  - 47 Antelope's playmate
  - 48 "Judith" composer
  - 50 Father's Day gift
- LEAPS CATONIA MEADOW OLIVER GIRDLE CINEMA MALE AHAB ROB DATA TICH APT HERS PEAK CAESARS PALACE TRAP SHUL DEY RYE ERIC ALD CORN AMOY BURTON IMPURE ETOILE NOOLES YEPEES GENES



CRYPTOQUIP

L E B H W H Y L B I B  
H O S F P J B T T V , O F P L ' U  
H N E H L W L P J H V P S S  
W B B Y N S E U B

Saturday's Cryptoquip: MY SISTER AND I DATE THE SAME ELECTRICIAN; I GUESS HE'S ALTERNATING, CURRENTLY.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: W equals D

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.