



American Kristi Yamaguchi attired in a traditional Japanese dress performs her routine during the international professional figure skating competition in Tokyo yesterday. Yamaguchi finished third to collect 12,000 dollars. — AFP photo

# Electronic eye to stay

PERTH, Jan 8: An electronic line system strongly condemned by some top players will be retained for the Hopman Cup tennis mixed teams' event, tournament director Paul McNamee said today, reports AFP. McNamee was emphatic today that organisers would not yield to criticism from such leading players as Germany's triple Wimbledon champion Boris Becker and up-and-coming Ukraine star, Andrei Medvedev, ranked 15th in the world. Becker and Medvedev pulled no punches in their assessment of the system after Germany had beaten Ukraine in the final of the 12-nation competition at Burswood Dome Saturday. "I disliked it very much," said Becker. "It made many mistakes."

previous year's tournament but not yet employed in any other international competition. "I was very happy with it," he said. "I accept it is not perfect, but there have been many fewer mistakes than when we used people on the lines. We definitely plan to use the system again next year." The system, developed by a South Australian company, is aimed at eliminating the human error element from line calls. Wilander left in wilderness AUCKLAND, Jan 8: Australian teen-ager James Sekulov rallied from the brink of defeat to down former world No 1 Mats Wilander Sunday in the final round of qualifying for the US \$328,000 New Zealand Open tennis championship reports AP. Wilander, winner of seven Grand Slam titles before taking a two-year break from the professional circuit, was beaten 4-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-2 by Sekulov after a two-hour, 25 minute contest.

The balls are impregnated with microscopic particles of metal which trigger a beep when the ball passes over the line. But Becker, Medvedev and some other players say the failure rate with the system is unacceptably high. Becker was the most outspoken, saying: "Sometimes the ball was so far out the line system could not pick it up. A human eye would not have made such a mistake. I believe we should go back to linesmen and women and keep it that way. We should stick to what we have done for more than 100 years." The system was briefly abandoned during the previous year's tournament when it was discovered players using metal rackets activated the beeper when they passed over the line. This problem did not occur during the recent event, but the view of significant numbers of players was that greater accuracy is achieved with unaided eyes. The system was introduced at the

# Becker better than ever

SYDNEY, Jan 8: Boris Becker believes his chances of a sixth Grand Slam title are growing by the day as he prepares to venture out into Australia's fierce summer heat for the first time in two years, reports Reuter. Becker's most recent trips Down Under have been for top-draw events, and in Perth on Saturday he helped Germany win the Hopman Cup tournament in the air-conditioned Burswood Dome. He missed last year's Australian Open to attend the birth of his son Noah, but set off for Melbourne on Sunday convinced his form is good enough to cope with whatever the elements have in store. "So far my preparation could not have been better," said the three-times Wimbledon champion, who has entered this week's Colonial Classic at Kooyong in the final run-up to the Open starting the following Monday. "I wanted three matches and got that in Perth, but now the outdoor season starts — I have a week to get out and get used to the hot weather. I'm in very good shape right now. I'm playing better and better as the days go by and everything is going to plan." Becker, whose Australian Open victory in 1991 remains his most recent Grand Slam

success, has already convinced several opponents that he is close to the form which earned him the world number one position that year. Andrei Medvedev, beaten in three sets by the German in their singles rubber in the Hopman Cup final, warned: "I knew he was serious about come to the net. I think he's playing as well as he did before when he was number one or two. He's back." Becker has the opportunity to prove the point at Kooyong where the eight-man field includes four other Wimbledon champions — Pete Sampras, Stefan Edberg, Michael Stich and Pat Cash. Meanwhile, 20-year-old Ukrainian Medvedev has delayed his departure to Sydney for the New South Wales Open, starting on Monday, to give himself more time to recover from knee and hamstring injuries. The withdrawal of Jennifer Capriati with flu has robbed the women's draw at White City of one major attraction, but has been counter-balanced by the decision to grant a wildcard entry to 14-year-old Swiss Martina Hingis. All the players involved in Australian's busy tennis summer, however, know their place in the spotlight is strictly relative to the arrival of a certain American player for an exhibition tournament in Adelaide this week. The newly-shorn Andre Agassi is preparing to make his first trip to the Australian Open, with only the Pope's forthcoming visit to Sydney generating more excitement.

playing in Australia and trying to get the number one spot back. France's Jean-Philippe Fleurian, another Hopman Cup victim, believes Becker has perfected the art of pacing himself for the major events. "In the first few rounds he always takes his time. It's only in the later rounds that he starts to serve and volley and



BORIS BECKER

# Howarth comes under fire

WELLINGTON, Jan 8: New Zealand cricket coach Geoff Howarth faces the sack after his team's disastrous tour of South Africa, Sunday newspapers predicted, reports AFP. The Sunday Star-Times published a front page report headlined "Howarth faces sack after tour debacle" and the Sunday News carried a column by former New Zealand Test cricketer Lance Cairns in which he said heads would undoubtedly roll. The Kiwis are on their way home after losing all the one-day matches they played in South Africa and losing the three-match Test series 2-1 after winning the first game. The Sunday Star-Times quoted New Zealand Cricket Board chairman Peter McDowell as saying: "The board and myself would be negligent if we didn't look at performances and where improvements can be made. Obviously the board will be considering Geoff's position in light of his performances."

In the same paper, former world-class New Zealand bowler Sir Richard Hadlee said tough questions needed to be answered following the dismal tour. In the Sunday News, Cairns said the tour could only be described as a disaster and the team management would have a lot of explaining to do. "No doubt heads will roll — and so they should," he said. However, captain Ken Rutherford seems to have escaped his tantrum when he swore at umpire Barry Lambson after being given out leg before wicket in the third Test against South Africa. Media comment has largely lauded Rutherford and there have been no suggestions he should lose the leadership. Rutherford was fined 75 per cent of his match fee and given a suspended sentence of two Test matches should he again misbehave. Rutherford said in an interview with The Sunday News he cared too much about playing for his country to accept bad umpiring decisions without reacting.

# Indian Board XI make England A bowlers toil

MADRAS, Jan 8: Touring England A toiled hard on an unresponsive wicket as the Indian Board President's Eleven piled up 255 for three on the first day of their four-day match here Sunday, reports AFP. The second string Englishmen, buoyant after their 96-run win over an Indian colts side in Bombay last week, were brought down to earth by the more experienced cricketers of the President's Eleven. Test prospects Rahul Dravid, Vikram Rathore and Saurav Ganguly, who are expected to lead India A's challenge in the three five-day internationals to follow, recorded attractive half-centuries. Dravid topscored with an unbeaten 72, while skipper Rathore made 59 and left-handed Ganguly contributed 69 after the home team won the toss and elected to bat in perfect conditions at the Chepauk. Left-arm seamer Mark Ilett gave the tourists an early breakthrough by trapping Ajay Mehra leg before for eight with the total at 25. England A's next success came after a 92-run stand for the second wicket between Rathore and Ganguly, which carried the score to 117. Leg spinner Ian Salisbury, who took nine wickets in the match against the Indian colts, was rewarded for a steady spell with both the other wickets to fall in the day. He had Rathore holing out to mid-on and then held a smart return catch off Ganguly to make the home team 160 for three. But Dravid, who added 43 for the third wicket with Ganguly, put on 95 for the undefeated fourth wicket with Rizwan Shamsah (31) not out to deny further success to the Englishmen. Salisbury was the best bowler on view with figures of two for 85 from 26 overs. Kent's left arm spinner Minal Patel had none for 47 from 23 overs and Ilett one for 27 from 12.

# Div II soccer

Sports Reporter Mirpur Chalanitika Sporting Club recorded their third consecutive win in the Second Division football league when they edged past Mahakhali Eleven by a solitary goal at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday. Akad struck the match-winning in the 24th minute. In the other engagement of the day, Prantic Krira Chakra and BRTC Sports Club shared honours in a one-all draw. After a goalless first half, Aziz gave Prantic a 43rd minute lead before Iqbal restored parity for BRTC in the 58th minute of the 70 minute encounter.

# Courier comes good at last

ADELAIDE, Jan 8: Jim Courier used a clubbing forehand to beat Frenchman Arnaud Boetsch 6-2, 7-5 Sunday in the final of the Australian hardcourt tennis championship and end a 17-month drought, reports AP. The powerful American, seeded third, won the 15th singles title of his career by overpowering the unseeded Frenchman in 95 minutes. Courier was winless in 1994 after winning five titles in both 1992 and 1993. The two-time Australian Open champion lifted his world ranking from 13th to 11th with the win and earned US \$43,000. He also boosted his confidence for this year's Australian Open, which begins Jan 16 in Melbourne. Courier's last win was in August, 1993, when he beat Boris Becker in the final in Indianapolis. "Winning never hurts," Courier said. "There was never a time when I doubted I would win again, but it is nice to finally do it. I'm certainly looking forward to the rest of the year." Courier went through the Australian hardcourt championship without dropping a set



JIM COURIER

but was not completely happy with his form against Boetsch. "I didn't play my best tennis but the encouraging thing is I still found a way to win," he breezed through the first set in 48 minutes. Boetsch's hopes flickered briefly when he broke to lead 1-0 in the second set, but Courier broke straight back and then broke again in the 12th game to seal the win. "I lost a bit of confidence in my forehand, especially my groundstrokes, especially my forehand," Boetsch said. "I don't know why, but I didn't feel very comfortable at the back of the court. He was hitting the ball very hard, harder than the other players." Courier said he hoped a more relaxed attitude would stand him in good stead through the New Year. "When I'm playing well and have a good spirit, my game matches up with almost everyone so it's just a question of being patient with myself rather than forcing it to happen," he said. Courier teamed with Australian Pat Rafter to also win the doubles title. The unseeded pair defeated the No.3 seeded combination of Byron Black of Zimbabwe and Canadian Grant Connell 7-6 (7-3), 6-4. Black and Connell had surprised the top-seeded Australian combination of Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge in the semifinals.

# Stars battle Down Under

MELBOURNE, Jan 8: Andre Agassi and Jim Courier have chosen an exhibition in Adelaide. Pete Sampras and Boris Becker will play a rival exhibition in Melbourne. Other tennis stars will contest official events in Sydney, Hobart and Auckland as they prepare for the Australian Open, reports AP. No fewer than five different events are scheduled for Australia and New Zealand this week as Australian Open competitors fine-tune their games for the first Grand Slam event of the year, which begins Jan 16 in Melbourne. The New South Wales Open — the traditional lead-up to the Australian Open — finds its men's singles draw denuded of drawcards by the pair of exhibitions. Courier, Agassi and leading Australian Pat Rafter will play the Adelaide International Challenge from Wednesday through Saturday. Wimbledon champion Sampras, Becker, Stefan Edberg, Michael Stich, Michael Chang and Australian Pat Cash, Jason Stoltenberg and Wally Masur will play the Colonial Mutual Classic in Melbourne on the same dates. That leaves Marc Rosset, Andrei Medvedev, Thomas Muster and Richard Krajicek as the top four men's seeds for the US \$328,000 New South Wales Open, which begins Monday at Sydney's White City courts. Rosset opens against Australian Richard Fromberg, while Medvedev will face American Richey Reneberg if Medvedev has recovered from a leg injury. The women's draw in Sydney is stronger, with Lindsay Davenport, Gabriela Sabatini, Kimiko Date and Mary Joe Fernandez the leading seeds. All four have first round byes, while 14-year-old Swiss prodigy Martina Hingis was given a wild card following the withdrawal of Jennifer Capriati, who is suffering from influenza. South African Wayne Ferreira has opted to prepare for the Open across the Tasman Sea in Auckland. Ferreira is the top seed for the US \$328,000 New Zealand Open, ahead of Russian Alexander Volkov, American MaliVai Washington



Sabine Hack of Germany makes a forehand return against Irina Spirlea during the Indonesian Open tennis final in Jakarta yesterday. Hack won the match 2-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-4. — AFP photo

and Spain's Javier Sanchez. Ines Gorrochategui of Argentina heads the entries for the US \$110,000 Tasmanian International Women's Open in Hobart, Tasmania. Her rivals include American Chanda Rubin, Judith Wiesner of Austria and Ginger Hejlskov-Nielsen of the United States. Kingdom won a gold medal in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics in the 110-metre hurdles. "Once we got out then the pressing started. I made a helluva surge to catch those guys but I started smiling too early. Then we hit the last few hurdles and they took off again." Angela Coon of Canada stunned the American contingent with a win in the women's 60-metre hurdles, in 8.23 seconds. Dawn Bowles of the United States who won the hurdles event at the World Student Games last year was second in 8.24 seconds and Texan Monifa Taylor was third in 8.34 seconds. The hype surrounding the men's 60-metre sprint fizzled with an easy victory for Canada's Donovan Bailey in 6.55 seconds. Aston Morgan of Jamaica was second in 6.65, and reigning Canadian champion Bruny Surin of Montreal was third, also in 6.65.

# Indonesian Open title Hack's

JAKARTA, Jan 8: Top seed Sabine Hack of Germany fought back from a 5-1 second-set deficit and beat Romania's Irene Spirlea 2-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-4 Sunday for the championship of the Indonesian women's Open tennis tournament, reports AP. The 26-year-old Hack fell into unforced errors in the first set, in which Spirlea broke in the third and seventh games. Spirlea, taller and 5 years younger, frustrated Hack with her sliced backhands as she broke again in the second set's third and fifth games. But Hack, 19th in the world women's rankings, battled back to 5-5. Spirlea, ranked 43rd and seeded sixth here, led again at 6-5 with another break, but Hack broke back again and took the tie-breaker. Hack took three straight games from 3-4 in the deciding set of the 2-hour, 15-minute match at Jakarta's Senayan Tennis Centre. The victory was worth \$12,500 from the purse of \$190,000. Spirlea shared in the doubles title, however, pairing with Claudia Porwik of Germany for a 6-2, 6-3 victory over seventh seeds Laurence Courtois and Nancy Feber of Belgium 6-2, 6-3 in the final.

# Johnson holds off Kingdom

SASKATOON, Saskatchewan, Jan 8: Allen Johnson held off fellow-American and former world record holder Roger Kingdom to win the 60-metre hurdles at the Grand Prix event of the Knights of Columbus indoor games on Saturday, reports Reuter. Johnson also beat Eugene Swift, sixth-ranked in the world at 110-metre hurdles, to win in 7.66 seconds. Swift was second in 7.67 and Kingdom was third in 7.69. "I never really got on a fast rhythm. I was feeling my way through the race until the fourth hurdle," Johnson said. In the race, hurdles crashed to the floor and one runner lost a shoe. Despite the problems, Kingdom was pleased with the season-opening effort. "You've got most of the quick starters for hurdling here today. It was a very tough field." Kingdom won a gold medal in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics in the 110-metre hurdles. "Once we got out then the pressing started. I made a helluva surge to catch those guys but I started smiling too early. Then we hit the last few hurdles and they took off again." Angela Coon of Canada stunned the American contingent with a win in the women's 60-metre hurdles, in 8.23 seconds. Dawn Bowles of the United States who won the hurdles event at the World Student Games last year was second in 8.24 seconds and Texan Monifa Taylor was third in 8.34 seconds. The hype surrounding the men's 60-metre sprint fizzled with an easy victory for Canada's Donovan Bailey in 6.55 seconds. Aston Morgan of Jamaica was second in 6.65, and reigning Canadian champion Bruny Surin of Montreal was third, also in 6.65.

# CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include: 1 Seance sound, 4 Probability P.M., 8 History chapter, 13 Shipbuilding wood, 14 Pusher's foe, 15 Theft, 17 Small combo, 18 Attention getter, 19 Someone of little substance?, 20 Subsequently, 22 Rabbit's cousin, 24 "...with sugar —?", 25 Thread, 29 — glance, 30 Broadcast, 31 Without delay, 32 Delicate ornamentation, 34 Houston acronym, 35 Can't forgo, 36 Turn of the Screw, author "— up, Doc?", 40 Heavy-weight competition?, 41 Respond to yeast, 42 Hazelnuts, 46 Stratford's river, 47 Thought, 48 Down Hang, 50 Emulate Mark Roth, 51 Parched DOWN, 1 Ump, 2 Jackie's second mate, 3 Splendid, 20 Do nothing, 21 Oppositionist, 22 Put on the payroll, 23 Sheltered, 25 Frankenstein's monster's fear, 26 Smitten, 27 Durante trademark, 28 "Jabberwocky" opener, 30 Census data, 33 Mean, 34 Appellation, 36 Early in the Civil War?, 37 Do a pre-Yule chore, 38 Apiary structure, 39 "Unto us — is given", 40 Dispatched, 42 Taradiddle, 43 Altar affirmative, 44 Road goo, 45 Pen.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid and solution. The grid is a 11x11 square with some cells filled with letters. The solution is: P X C V O O I N Y P X K Z F N H H Y G O L C J O L P X E O E C W J P, E C P M O O V W P C A L O K Z X C K G N P I X K A X F. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NERVOUS ACCOUNTANT ADMITTED TO HIS DOCTOR: "I'M HEARING STRANGE INVOICES." Today's Cryptoquip clue: E 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.