



Grandmaster Niaz Murshid awaits Briton Mark Hebden's next move during their eighth round encounter in the second United Insurance GMs chess championship at the Jalsha Ghar of Hotel Purbani yesterday. — Star photo

Hebden outmanoeuvres Niaz

Sports Reporter

Grandmaster Mark Hebden once again increased his lead at the top of the points table to one point when the Briton beat his Bangladeshi counterpart Niaz Murshid in an eighth-round match of the second United Insurance Grandmasters' chess championship, ending in the process the country's lone GM's three-match winning spree.

Playing with white pieces, Niaz, who shrugged off a subdued start on his way to embarking on a three-match remarkable run, came across an impenetrable King's Indian Defence, schemed by the English GM, and eventually resigned after an epic 67-move work-out.

Yesterday's win plus close rival Russian Grandmaster Mikhail Krasenkov's draw against Indonesian GM Edhi Handoko, takes Hebden one point clear at the top with a haul of seven and a half points. On the other hand, Niaz, who had solely occupied the third place on completion of the seven-round matches Saturday, found himself tagged with Handoko in the fourth place, half a point behind Uzbek GM Gregory Serper and Tajik IM Magaram Magoedov.

Krasenkov yesterday came under serious pressure from his Indonesian opponent who employed his white pieces along the lines of Scotch Opening, nevertheless managed to hold his citadel until the 42nd move before both GMs agreed to a draw.

Serper, the tournament's highest FIDE-rated player who lost to the Russian only the day before, bounced back to winning ways, prevailing over local International Master Reefat-bin-Sattar in the accelerated finishing session. The defeat virtually decimates Reefat's prospect of achieving a GM norm as the Dhaka University

The only piece of good news came from the weakling in the local charge, IM Zillur Rahman, who added half a point to take his poor haul to one after drawing with Indian IM Varugese Koshi. The two IMs from neighbouring countries manoeuvred for some 118 moves, the longest of the meet so far, before realising the match was only consuming time with little purpose. Koshi joined English GM Stuart Conquest in the two-point league.

Conquest, the beleaguered Briton, however, had the misfortune of losing yet another match with his yesterday's conqueror being Magoedov. Park Defence was not strong enough to ward the Tajik off as the success-lorn British GM saw Magoedov race away with a victory after 55 moves.

First two rounds' surprising leader Enrique Sivilano of the Philippines finally found fortune smiling upon him as Pakistani IM Mahmood Ahmed Khan Lodhi resigned after 36 moves in a game of Budapest Gambit.



student is now left with five matches with five and a half points required.

Reefat's fellow-countryman IM Ziaur Rahman fared no better as the Bangladeshi National champion continued his winless streak, going down fighting to Indonesian IM Ruben Gunawan after 60 moves.

Zia, already out of contention for a GM norm, dropped further a stern as his semi-Slav defence failed to fend off Gunawan's white pieces. While Gunawan raised his tally to four, Zia remained glued to his previous collection of two and a half points.

Biman compound BU's woe

Sports Reporter

Brothers Union's already wobbling Navana Premier Division cricket league campaign received another big blow when Bangladesh Biman handed them a narrow seven-run defeat at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday, leaving the Gopibagh outfit's prospect for a super league berth under serious threat.

Brothers, who suffered their third consecutive defeat yesterday, folded their innings on 197 to the penultimate ball of the last over in their chase for Biman's 45-over collection of 204 for five.

However, Brothers were off to a roaring start scoring 87 runs in only 19.2 overs for the loss of one wicket before three quick dismissals in the span of only ten runs simply knocked them off the course.

Sajid Hassan, who lost his Pakistani opening partner Aabid Hanif at 28, was the first

Nirman cricket

Ganabhaban Government High School beat Saint Gregory High School by 26 runs in one of the two Nirman schools cricket tournament matches on the western strip of the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Sent in to bat, Ganabhaban were all out for 149 in 27.3 overs with middle-order batsman Atiq slamming 65.

Emdad claimed three for 27 while Gregory's Sajjad took two for 22.

Later, Ferdous and Mamun of Ganabhaban captured five and three wickets respectively to bundle out Gregorians for 123 in 33.1 overs.

Mitu 47 and Mainul 19, were the only double digit scorers.

In the other match at the Residential Model High School ground, Pallabi beat Radiant International School by 80 runs.

Electing to bat, Pallabi piled up 163 for seven with six batsmen reaching double figures.

Skipper Rana made 39 while Sumit contributed 23 runs.

Later, Jonny claimed four wickets while Sumit and Uzzal captured two each to shoot Radiant out for 83 in 28.2 overs.

to go after sharing 54 runs with his skipper Al-Shahriar for the second wicket. Sajid made a patient 56-ball 32.

But the real rot started when Brothers lost in-form Pakistani Amir Hanif for no score with the scoreboard showing 89 for three in 21.3 overs. Shoaib Hassan's dismissal eight runs later, didn't do them any good.

Although, Al-Shahriar held up one end for quite a while and Naimur Rashid along with Sohail Islam contributed useful knocks down the order, a win for Brothers was never on the cards.

Al-Shahriar top-scored with a 66-ball 43 while Naimur and Sohail chipped in with 27 and 24 respectively as Brothers Union innings folded ten runs off the winning target.

Earlier in the morning, Biman, sent in to make the first use of the wicket, rattled 204 for five in the stipulated overs, thanks to a cracking unbeaten half-century from

former Indian Test-cricketer Sanjeev Sharma, who returned to action for the airlines team after being at home on a Ranji Trophy duty.

Sharma used 49 balls for a swashbuckling 55 as Biman collected 44 runs from the last 20 deliveries to post a fighting total.

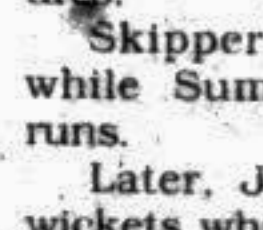
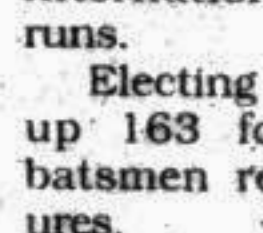
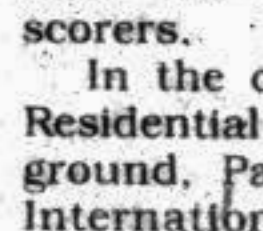
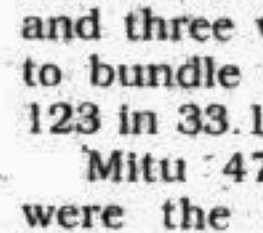
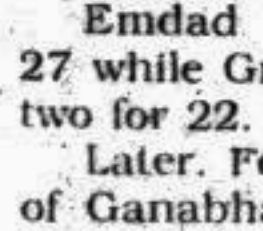
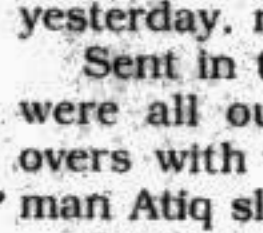
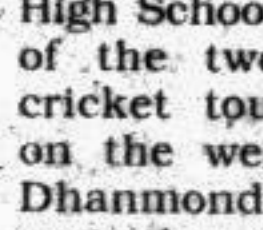
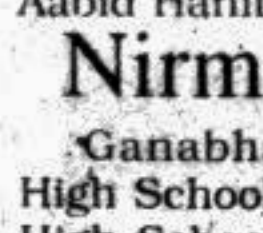
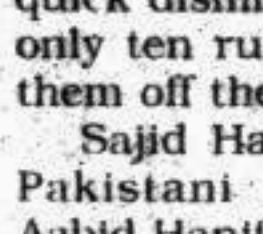
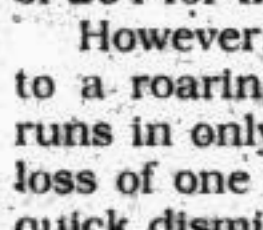
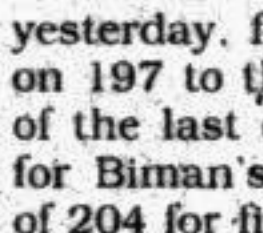
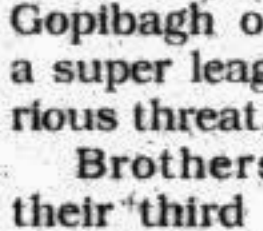
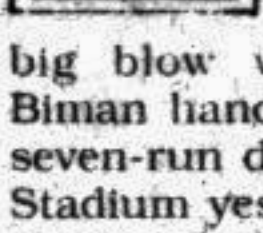
The openers — Jahangir Alam and Ziaur Rashid — gave the eventual winners a resounding start, putting on 84 runs for the first wicket in 22.2 overs.

Zia followed the aggressive Indian with a sedate 75-ball 46 while Jahangir made a useful 29. Wasim Haider, the Pakistani allrounder who was a member of the World Cup winning squad, hit 25.

In the other match of the day, Victoria Sporting Club beat Gulshan Youth by 47 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Batting first, Victoria made 189 in 43.5 overs with Rajinder Singh and Mirhab Hossain making 53 each.

Gulshan could make only 142 in reply with Sadeque Amin top-scoring with 42.



Kamsky surges, Karpov held

SANGHINAGAR, India, Feb 12: Gata Kamsky of the United States crushed Russian rival Valery Salov and raced to a 4-1 lead Sunday in the 500,000 dollar FIDE world chess semi-finals here, reports AFP.

Kamsky grabbed his third straight win with white pieces and now needs just 1.5 points to win the tie. With five games left, Salov has little chance of taking Kamsky the full distance.

Anatoly Karpov of Russia and Boris Gelfand of Belarus drew their fifth game to be level at 2.5 points at the half-way stage.

The first to reach 5.5 points in eightier match will clash for the title in August.

The tournament here is organised by the International Chess Federation, the FIDE.

An alternative championship is being organised by the Professional Chess Players' Association headed by the world's number one player and former FIDE champion Gari Kasparov.

Nigeria urges FIFA to give a second thought

LAGOS, Feb 12: Nigeria have asked FIFA to reconsider a decision to cancel next month's World Youth Cup because of an outbreak of cholera and meningitis in the country, reports AFP.

General Diya, number-two in the country's military regime, told a press conference here Saturday that FIFA's fears on health grounds were "unsubstantiated and invalid."

And he produced a letter from Dr William Aldis, World Health Organisation representative in Nigeria, to back up his remarks.

The reasons of a deteriorating health situation, specifically the outbreak of cholera and meningitis in the country advanced by the FIFA emergency committee as justification for the decision, are invalid, unsubstantiated, and untenable," said General Diya.

"The federal government states categorically that Nigeria has met all the requirements of FIFA for the hosting of the world youth soccer championship 1995 and therefore restates its faith in the ability of the FIFA to reconsider its decision on hosting of the soccer tournament on the principles of fair-play, objectivity, equity, and good conscience."

Quoting from a letter addressed to FIFA by Dr Aldis, General Diya said: "We wish to confirm that both cities — Enugu and Kaduna — are free from any epidemics, including cholera and cerebrospinal meningitis and therefore do not pose any health hazards. It is my opinion that health conditions in Nigeria at this time do not represent a significant or unusual risk to the country. I see no reason why the proposed events cannot take place as planned."

Zaragoza beats Sanabria

MIAMI, Feb 12: Former three-time world champion Daniel Zaragoza of Mexico scored a convincing unanimous decision over fellow ex-champion Jose Sanabria of Venezuela in a featherweight fight Saturday night, reports AP.

Zaragoza's route to victory was result of strong lead lefts throughout the 10-round bout. The left-handed Zaragoza also utilized strong right jabs to Sanabria's body.

The performance enabled Zaragoza to win every round but one in the cards of the bout's three judges. Two judges scored it 100-90, while the third had Zaragoza winning 99-91.

Sanabria, 31, is now 21-12 and dropped his fourth of last five fights. There were no knockdowns.

An exclusive interview with hockey superstar Shahbaz Ahmed 'Not for the money alone'

Sports Reporter

Worldwide introduction of professional leagues is the only way to help hockey turn into a crowd-pulling sport, feels Shahbaz Ahmed, the game's most celebrated and skilful forward, now in Dhaka under a five-match contract with Mohammedan Sporting Club to play in the Green Delta Insurance First Division super league.

Talking to this correspondent at the Mohammedan club tent yesterday evening, the mercurial Pakistani player, who retired from the international scene after leading his

to play in such a minor league or is there some other reason? **Shahbaz:** No, it's not just the money. A few days back Tawfiq (an ardent Mohammedan supporter living in America) asked me to play for Mohammedans. Although I received offers from other clubs, some coming up with more lucrative deals, I decided to honour my friend's wishes.

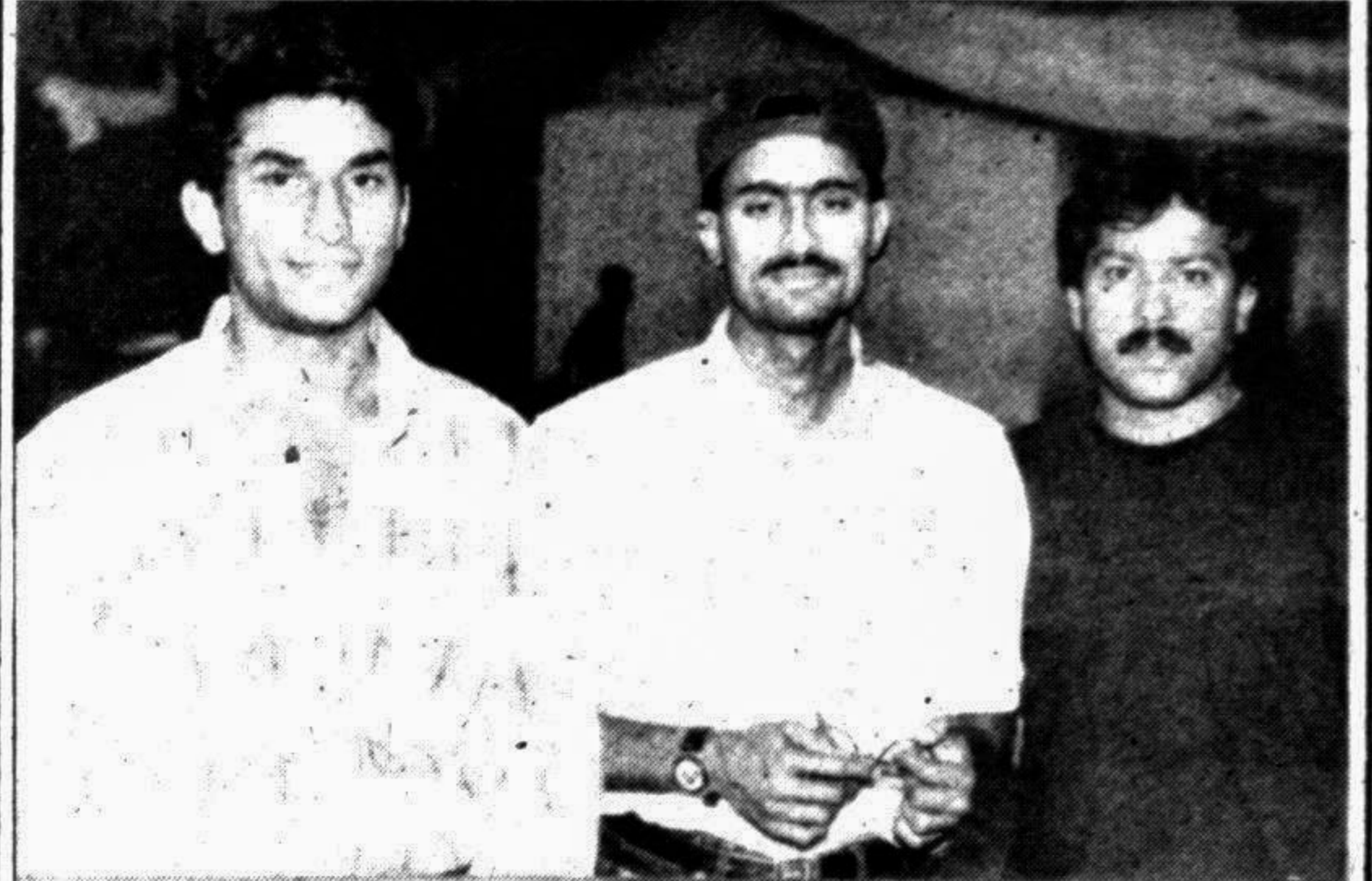
DS: Do you think a sudden switch from astro-turf to grass will affect your usual skills? **Shahbaz:** I think it will, but I will try my very best to entertain the local crowd.

DS: How do you feel about your new teammates and the local fans? **Shahbaz:** First of all, the Eu-

haven't spend even a month with my family. As the game offers very little from the financial point of view, I will have to pursue a professional career away from hockey.

DS: Is there any player on the international circuit that you really rate high? **Shahbaz:** Tahir Zaman is doing well and I expect him to go a long way.

DS: What, in your opinion, is the basic difference between what differentiates the sub-continental approach to the game from that of the Europeans? **Shahbaz:** First of all, the Eu-



Pakistani hockey wizard Shahbaz Ahmed (C) is flanked by compatriots Tahir Zaman (L) and Mohammedan Irfan after signing for Mohammedan Sporting Club yesterday. The World Cup trio will play in the Green Delta super league that commences from Tuesday. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

ropeans mainly depend on power and employ man-to-man defence which makes their approach rather defensive compared to the fluent, attacking style we are used to. I believe the sub-continental approach is more effective as far as crowd entertainment is involved, as it was proved in the recently-concluded World Cup. The Australians were simply all praise for the way we played.

DS: Do you have any specific suggestions regarding the improvement of our standard? **Shahbaz:** Well, first you need to switch to astro-turf pitches and then unearth talents from the grass-roots level. I mean, from the school level. And a few good coaches can do the trick for you.

When this correspondent asked him whether he is interested in taking up a job as Bangladesh's national coach Shahbaz, who recently performed Umrah and had his head shaved on the occasion, said with a smile: "Why not?"

Before making a Dhaka league debut, the Pakistani trio will play an exhibition match against the Bangladesh Army at the Hockey Stadium early this morning to get a feel of the ground.

Following are excerpts of the interview Shahbaz gave to The Daily Star (DS).

DS: Is it just the lure of the lure that has brought you here

to triumph in the World Cup held in Australia late last year, emphasised the need of professionalism to attract more spectators to the arena.

Dubbed 'Hockey's Maradona' by his Japanese fans and 'F-16' and 'Superman' by his Indian rivals, Shahbaz completed registration formalities at the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) office in the afternoon along with fellow-World Cuppers and PIA teamates Tahir Zaman and Mohammed Irfan, inspiring awe among the Mohammedan fans and the country's hockey lovers alike.

During the World Cup in Australia last year we saw you play with your right thigh strapped. Are you fully fit now? **Shahbaz:** I'm alright now, I feel no pain.

DS: Have you made any plan for the future now that you have retired from the international hockey? **Shahbaz:** To be precise, I have not yet made up my mind. You know, I play for PIA in the domestic leagues and I plan to continue for a few years more as a player before I contemplate my next move.

DS: Having left the game at your peak do you think hockey has anything more in offer for you? **Shahbaz:** I have been absorbed in the game since I made my international debut in 1986. Believe it or not, I

Agassi, Chang meet in final

SAN JOSE, California, Feb 12: Michael Chang dug out of 1-4 hole in the third set and won five straight games to knock off Jim Courier 4-6, 7-6(7-5), 6-4 Saturday night in the semifinals of the San Jose Open, reports AP.

He wasn't giving me too many chances, so I was just trying to hang tough," said the second-seeded Chang, who will face top-seeded Andre Agassi in the championship match Sunday night.

Agassi advanced with a 6-4, 6-2 win over fifth-seeded MaliVai Washington. Agassi is 7-2 lifetime against Chang, last losing to him in 1993 at Cincinnati. They have never before met in a tournament final.

Courier and Chang tangled for the 13th time since their first match in 1989, and 11 times before the winner took it in straight sets. Saturday's matched started out true to that same form, with Courier taking the first set 6-4 and immediately breaking Chang in the second to go up 2-0.

But Chang eventually forced a tiebreaker, in which he recovered from a mini-break on the opening point to win 7-5, two of those points coming on aces and the set-decider on an unreturnable serve.

"I was fortunate to get those two aces in the tiebreaker," Chang said. "They came at just the right time."

Chang had seven aces in the match, giving him 29 for the tournament.

Courier picked up the pace in the third set, breaking Chang twice to go up 4-1 before saving in.

Chang held for the first time in the set to trail 2-4, then broke Courier in the seventh and ninth games as closed out the match with a five-game streak.

"He picked up his game and put a little pressure on me," Courier said, "and got back into the match. Michel's a competitor. He never gives up. Everybody should be like that."

After losing seven of their first 10 matches, Chang has now won three straight over Courier. Oddly enough, they have yet to meet in a Grand Slam event.

Courier, ranked 11th in the world, lost of only the second time in 16 matches this year, while No 6 Chang improved to 9-1. Each player's only other loss came to No 1 Pete Sampras.

Agassi's march to the top of the tennis world took another solid turn Saturday when he dismantled Washington in the first semifinal.

"Right now, I'm not struggling at all," Agassi said. "It's a joy to be out there and a joy to

be playing. I've been saying that for seven months now, and there's no reason I can't do it for a few more."

Ranked No 2 in the world, the 24-year-old Agassi has gone 33-2 in match play since starting his drive to win the US Open as an unseeded, player last September.

"He looks the same, appears to be the same to me," said Washington, who beat Agassi in straight sets last year in Atlanta. "He's always produced. But the difference is now he's producing it week after week."

In 1995, Agassi has won 29 of the 30 sets he has played. He waited until a late break to take the first set against Washington, who led 4-3 before losing nine out of the next 11 games — and the match.

Neither player had lost a service break in the tournament coming into the match, but Agassi broke Washington four times. Agassi also lost a break early in the second set, and finding himself down 2-1, it forced him to regroup.

"I really didn't feel in control of the match until I broke him at 5-2," Agassi said.

Washington, who in 1992 reached No 11 in the world, knows he'll have to start winning against top 10 players again if he hopes to improve on his current No 40 ranking. "I'm happy with the way the week went," Washington said. "But that's the only way to get back to the top 10 or top 20. Once you start beating top 10 guys, then your confidence grows."

Burki angered by ACB charges

ISLAMABAD, Feb 12: A top Pakistani cricket official said today he was angry about charges by his Australian counterpart that Australian cricketers had been offered bribes to throw a Test match in Pakistan last year, reports Reuters.

"We take serious exception to the fact that this occurrence five months ago was not brought to the attention of the BCCP (Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan)," Javed Burki, chairman of the ad hoc committee of the BCCP, told Reuters.

Burki said the BCCP had asked the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) for names of those alleged to have offered bribes so that the BCCP could launch its own inquiry.

"We are treating this very seriously and we would be delighted to know who made the offer because we must rid the game of these characters," he said, adding that there was a lot of betting on Test match results in Pakistan as elsewhere.

ACB chief executive Graham Halbish said on Saturday that several Australian players had been approached during the October-November tour of Pakistan.

He would not confirm a report by the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper that spin twins Shane Warne and Tim Latham had rejected an offer of 50,000 dollars to throw the first Test against Pakistan in Karachi, but confirmed that an offer had been made before the match which Pakistan won by one wicket.

The newspaper said a prominent Pakistani cricket personality whom it did not name had tried in vain to bribe the pair. It said another offer was made before the third and final Test in Lahore, which ended in a draw.

Neither Warne nor May have commented on the allegations.

Burki said the BCCP had told the ACB of its surprise that it should only discover through the media that the ACB had asked the London-based International Cricket Conference (ICC), the sport's top governing body, to investigate.

"I am now trying to arrange a meeting with the ICC's chief executive David Richards in London, probably on February 20, so that we can get to the bottom of this," Burki said.

Barcelona's nightmare continues

MADRID, Feb 12: Defending champions Barcelona plunged to a humiliating 5-0 defeat on Saturday against lowly Racing Santander, third from bottom of the Spanish First Division, reports Reuters.

Last year's European Cup finalists, missing three key men through injury and suspension, collapsed spectacularly in the second-half and finished the match with just nine players after Albert Ferrer and goalkeeper Carlos Busquets were both sent off.

It ended a miserable week for coach Johan Cruyff who saw his side crash 4-1 at home to Atletico Madrid in the Spanish Cup on Tuesday.

In the absence of the injured Ronald Koeman and Miguel Nadal and suspended Sergi Barjuan, Cruyff opted for Ferrer and Abelardo Fernandes in defence and his patched-up team looked the better side for much of the first half.

All that changed after an error by Ferrer a minute before half time allowed Russian Dimitri Radchenko to free Esteban Torres for Racing's opening goal.

Racing's captain Enrique Setien scored a second from a header in the 51st minute and Barcelona's fortunes went from bad to worse 10 minutes later when Spanish international Ferrer was sent off for a foul on David Billaubon.

Barcelona were quietly four down as Jesus Merino in the 68th minute and Radchenko in the 72nd took advantage of their defensive disorganisation.

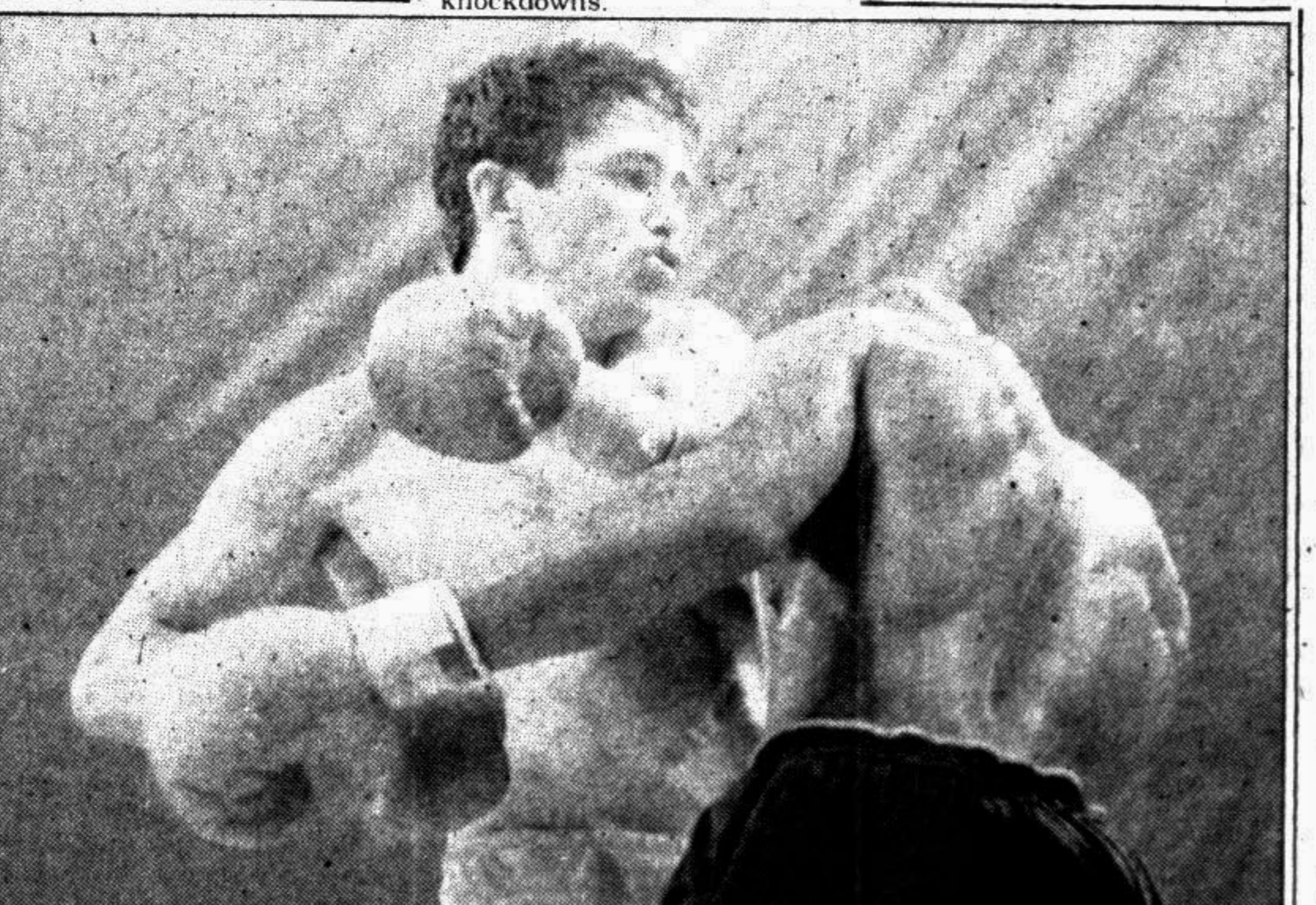
Racing, who have not won in their last four matches, gleefully added a fifth from the penalty spot through Radchenko in the 88th minute after Busquets had been sent off for fouling the Russian.

Barcelona, in third place after last weekend and trailing leaders Real Madrid by four points, could slip further behind if their bitter rivals win today against bottom of the table Logrones.

Avalanche kills three Germans in Austrian Alps

VIENNA, Feb 12: Three German skiers died and another was seriously injured in an avalanche in the Austrian Alps Saturday, police announced, reports AFP.

The skiers were buried under more than 1.50 metres (five feet) of snow. They could not immediately be identified.



Mexican Alberto Jimenez (L) unleashes a left hook during his WBO flyweight title bout against defending champion Jacob "Baby-Jake" Matlala of South Africa at the Carousel near Pretoria on Feb 11. Jimenez dethroned Matlala. — AFP photo