

Sport



President Abdur Rahman Biswas hands over the trophy to British Grandmaster Mark Hebden who became unbeaten champion in the second United Insurance Grandmasters' chess tournament at the Jalsha Ghar of Purbani Hotel yesterday. — Star photo

Goals galore in Sher-e-Bangla Cup football

Sports Reporter
Arshad and Noor Alam notched up hat-tricks to lead Dinajpur to a 9-1 drubbing of Panchagarh in Zone Eight match of the 19th Sher-e-Bangla Cup national football championship played at Rangpur yesterday.

Arshad and Noor Alam apart, Mustaqim, Shamim and Tajul netted once each for the winners while Abu Taher scored the lone goal for the hapless Panchagarh.

In a Zone Five match at Patuakhali, Arifuzzaman struck twice while Sushil Majumder, Ziaul Islam and Liton Khan scored once each as Peripur routed Jhalakati 5-1. A penalty from Sirajul Islam put the losers' name in the scoresheet.

Kazi Kamal and Badrul Alam pumped in two goals each as Jessore outplayed Meherpur 4-1 in a Zone Six engagement at Khulna. Rezaul Haq scored the consolation goal for the vanquished.

Fardipur beat Gopalganj 3-0 in a Zone one match, thanks to a double strike from Ujjal. Abul Fayez scored the other for the victors.

The other match of the day, a Zone Three affair at Cox's Bazaar, saw Noakhali squeezing out a solitary goal victory over Bandarban with Shaheen scoring the all-important goal.

Sampras sails

MEMPHIS, Tennessee, Feb 17: It took top seed Pete Sampras exactly one hour to dispose of 15th seed Marcelo Filippini of Uruguay and roll into the quarter-finals of the 800,000-dollar Kroger/St Jude international tournament on Thursday, reports Reuter.

"I didn't serve quite as well as I would have liked, but I won pretty handily," the world number one said of his easy 6-2, 6-2 victory.

"I was pretty consistent from the backcourt. I need to be ready tomorrow," added Sampras, who in today's quarter-finals will face 10th-seeded Swede Thomas Enqvist, a 6-4, 6-1 victor over Brett Steven of New Zealand.

Second seed Michael Chang and third-seeded fellow-American Todd Martin joined Sampras in the quarter-finals.

Chang dropped the first set to 16th seed Vince Spadea, but rallied for a 2-6, 6-1, 6-4 victory.

"I didn't think I got off to that slow of start," said the sixth-ranked Chang. "He came out playing some really good tennis."

Defending champion Martin advanced with an easy 6-1, 6-4 victory over compatriot Richey Reneberg to set up a quarter-final against big-serving Canadian left-hander Greg Rusedzki, who scored the day's big upset.

Rusedzki rifled 17 aces past fifth seed Aaron Krickstein en route to a 6-4, 7-6 (7-4) victory.

US to bid for '99 eves' WC

CHICAGO, Feb 17: The United States will bid to host the 1999 FIFA Women's World Championship, the US federation announced Thursday, reports AP.

The American women won the inaugural title in 1991 in China and will compete in this summer's tournament, scheduled for June 5-18 in Sweden.

US soccer officials will meet with FIFA representatives this weekend in Helsingborg, Sweden, where the draw for this summer's women's World Cup will be staged on Saturday.

Hebden duly wins title

Sports Reporter
Mark Hebden predictably and indeed deservedly won the second United Insurance Grandmasters' chess championship when the English GM drew with Reefat-bin-Sattar in the 13th and final round at the Jalsha Ghar of Hotel Purbani yesterday.

Hebden, needing only half a point for the title, however, came across serious challenge from the local International Master, who schemed his attack with the white pieces in the line of Scotch Opening and manoeuvred to advantageous position halfway through. Nevertheless, the Briton's superior game plan plus a couple of indiscreet moves from Reefat in the middle game led the tie to a deadlock after 44 moves, saving the Englishman from a last moment disaster.

Hebden, who was richer for US dollars 2,300 for his success, surged to solo lead in the points table on completion of the fourth round matches and never relaxed his grip on the top slot, despite drawing four matches. His eventual collection read 11 points from 13 outings.

Russian Grandmaster Mikhail Krasenkov, who let slip a chance to stall the Briton's charge towards championship when he drew in their penultimate round affair Thursday, couldn't make amends for his mistakes midway through the tournament when he was forced to five draws and had to

be content with the runner-up purse of US dollars, 1,200.

Although he won with white pieces yesterday against Tajik IM Magaram Magoedov in a game of Tarasch Defence, it was not enough to reduce the half-a-point hiatus with the eventual winner.

Uzbek Grandmaster Gregory Serper, the theoretical pre-meet favourite or being the highest FIDE-rated player, couldn't quite live up to expectations and finished a distant third with eight points. Serper, who drew his last match with Indian IM Varugese Koshi in 31 moves of a game played along the lines of English Opening, pocketed US dollars 1,000.

Although Reefat failed to accomplish the goal of earning a GM norm, there was a source for some solace as the anthropology student was entitled to

US dollars 750 for finishing fourth ahead of three Grandmasters.

Earning same amount in prize-money were IM Magoedov, Indonesian GM Edhi Handoko and country's lone Grandmaster Niaz Murshid for being placed fifth, sixth and seventh respectively.

Handoko played out a safe draw with Ruben Gunawan in an all-Indonesian affair in 12 moves in a tie of Petrov Defence while Niaz bowed to his English counterpart GM Stuart Conquest.

Niaz adopted the Siamese variation of King's Indian Defence against the beleaguered Briton's white pieces and resigned after 30 moves.

In the range of eight to 13th places were Pakistani IM Mahmood Ahmed Khan Lodhi, Indian IM Varugese Koshi, GM Conquest, IM Ziaur Rahman, Filipino IM Enrique Sivilano and Indonesian IM Ruben Gunawan.

Zillur Rahman, the Bangladeshi IM, achieved the dubious distinction of finishing last in the two-week tournament.

Fourteen players — six of them Grandmaster — from nine countries including four from host Bangladesh took part in the Swiss league championship.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas distributed prizes among the participants in the afternoon.



Graf too good for Hingis

PARIS, Feb 17: Both players were hupressed with the other's game but it was Steffi Graf, in the second match of her comeback from injuries, defeating 14-year-old prodigy Martina Hingis in a quarterfinal Thursday at the Paris Open, reports AP.

Although Graf won 6-2, 6-3 in 61 minutes, the young Swiss player was tougher than the score indicated in her first match against the German star.

"I didn't expect her to play that well. She surprised me with her solid tennis," Graf said. "But I haven't played too many matches and my concentration went a bit and wasn't 100 per cent."

Hingis eliminated last year's finalist, Julie Halard of France, in the second round, and ranked No 18 in the world.

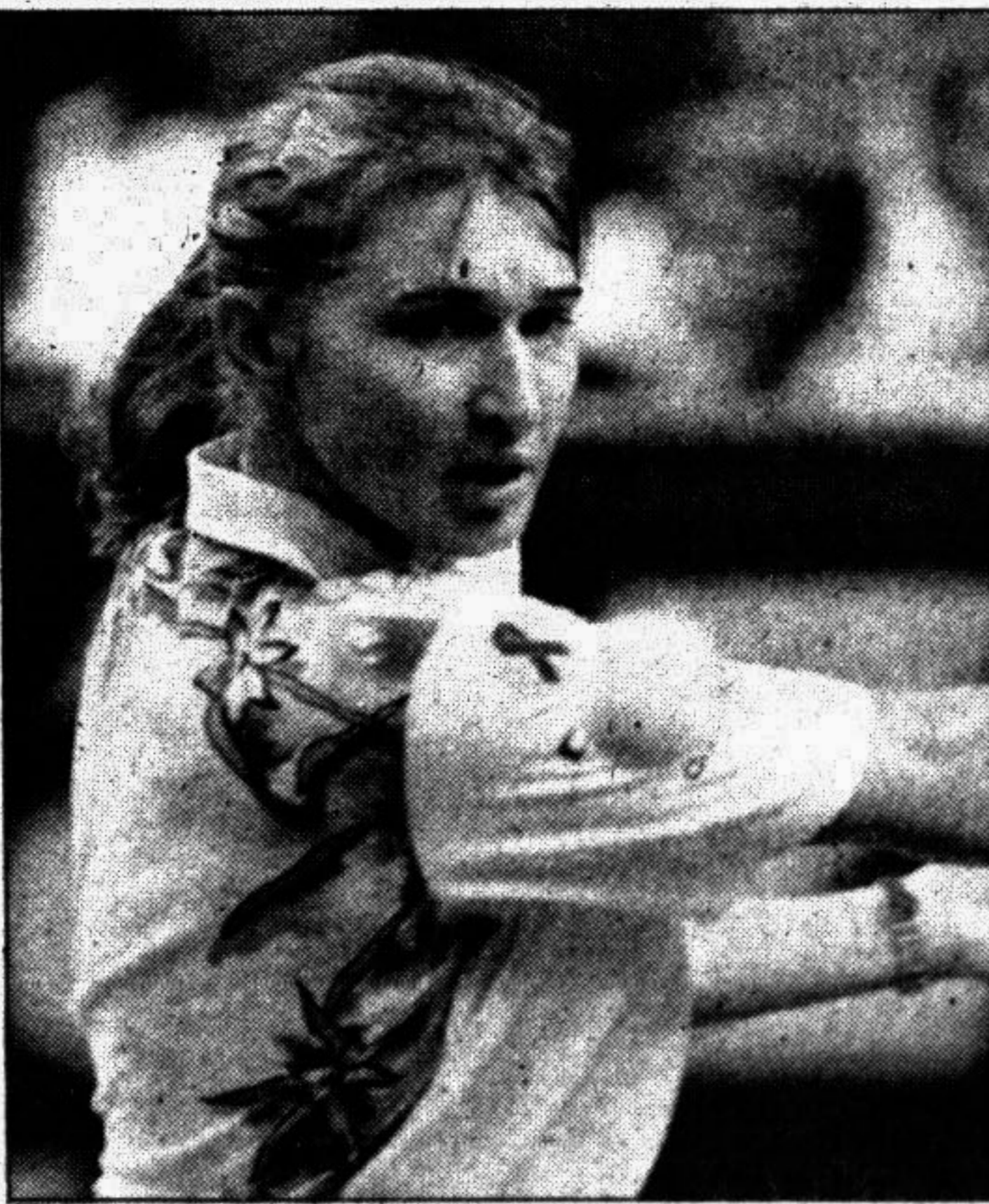
But Hingis found Graf a bit tougher.

"There is a big difference between the top five and the others," Hingis said. "Seeing her on TV is not the same thing like in real life. The speed is a lot more impressive. Steffi played left and right and I couldn't resist that kind of pressure in a whole match."

Graf controlled the pace, hitting forehand winners at key points. However Hingis was able stay in the match by taking advantage of the weaker Graf backhand and occasionally firing winners of her own. She broke Graf's service twice and having break opportunities in three others games.

Graf took the first set in 26 minutes. The only time Graf was in trouble was in the first game when two double faults gave Hingis a break point. But two forehand winners and an ace erased that and gave Graf the game.

Hingis stiffened her defense and even broke serve to go ahead 1-0 in the second set with the help of two consecutive backhand errors by Graf. But Graf broke right back to even it at 1-1.



Top seed Steffi Graf Germany makes a backhand return during her quarterfinal match against Martina Hingis of Switzerland at the Paris Indoor Open on Thursday. Graf won 6-2, 6-3. — AFP photo

Karpov moves closer to final

SANGHINAGAR, India, Feb 17: Defending champion Anatoly Karpov of Russia moved closer to a berth in the final of the World Chess Championship Friday after he took a 5-3 lead over Boris Gelfand of Belarus, reports AP.

Karpov beat Gelfand in the adjourned seventh game and is just half a point away from reaching the final.

Karpov had adjourned the game after 60 moves and held a slight edge. When they resumed Friday, he squeezed Gelfand by exchanging one of the queen-side pawns and forced him to resign after 80 moves.

On Thursday, Karpov and Gelfand drew their eighth game. The ninth game between the two Grandmasters will be played on Saturday.

Yamaha cricket

Even thirty-two extras were of no help to Gopibagh Friends Association who lost their Yamaha First Division cricket league match to Bangladesh Railway by 18 runs at the City Club ground yesterday.

Railway batted first and were all out for 169 in 44.1 overs.

Tareq and Afzal topscored with 39 each.

Nasir and Hira claimed two wickets apiece.

Gopibagh were all out for 151 in 40 overs with the Railway conceding 32 extras.

Nazimuddin was the pick of the bowlers with a haul of three for 26.

Fright for Frazier

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oklahoma, Feb 17: Second-seeded American Amy Frazier had her hands full with Dutch teenager Yvette Basting on Thursday, barely surviving a second-round encounter at the Iga classic tournament, reports Reuter.

Never in an comfortable position until the well into the third set against a player ranked 119 places below her, the 15th-ranked Frazier finally prevailed 4-6, 7-6, (7-5), 6-2 in just under two hours.

Frazier, who won this tournament in 1990 and reached the semifinals two of the last three years, managed to avoid facing a match point in the second set or the tie-break. But she was under serious pressure from the 17-year-old Basting throughout.

"She is such a good player and hits so many good shots," Frazier said of the 134-ranked Basting. "I had to fight the whole match. It seems like all the games were deuce."

"The depth is so unbelievable on tour. I know every person I play is going to be good. I was happy with the way I played because I wasn't quite sure what to expect."

Unseeded Audra Keller scored the day's lone upset when the 111-ranked American picked off sixth seed Nicole Bradtke of Australia 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7-2) in another second round match. Bradtke is ranked 54th in the world.

Fifth-seeded American Lisa Raymond was also taken the distance before stopping unseeded Dominique Monami of Belgium 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Bowe the best

NEW YORK, Feb 17: Heavyweight Riddick Bowe is ignored by those who rank fighters for the various alphabetic sanctioning associations. Not by boxing writers, though, reports AP.

A curious public relations firm asked 50 American boxing writers and broadcasters to rank the top five heavyweights.

Bowe came out No. 1, selected as the best heavyweight by 76 per cent of those surveyed. George Foreman was No. 2, picked as the best by 14 per cent of the fighters.

GMCC crash down to earth

Sports Reporter
Pakistan World Cupper Wasim Haider's allround excellence propelled champions Bangladesh Biman to post a surprisingly facile seven wicket victory over a spirited Greater Mymensingh Cricket Club (MCC) in yesterday's lone Navana Premier Division cricket league encounter at the Dhaka Stadium.

The lithe handsome cricketer of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) remained unbeaten on a very wellmade 58 as the cricket team of the national flag carrier, which had jointly won the title with Abahani last year, raised 186 for three wickets only with two balls to spare in the stipulated 45 overs.

Earlier, GMCC, recently riding on an awe wave because of their stumping two wicket victory over giants Mohammedans, largely due to the batting skills of Pakistani Mahmood Hamid, mustered 185 for seven wickets after Biman's captain Enamul Haq chose to field first on winning the toss.

Although there were no centuries from Mahmood, another Pakistani Rals Ahmad sustained this year's trend of all the Pakistani recruits to the fore in the league with a breezy half century.

He made a splendid 66 off 62 balls only with the help of two sixes, both off veteran of free Anwarul Amin, and as many fours before becoming one of the two victims of Indian Test-discard Sanjeev Sharma, the other foreigner in Biman besides Haider.

Sunwar Hossain chipped in with an unbeaten 32 from 36



WASIM HAIDER

Jahangir Talukdar.

Although the brisk right-arm medium pacer did not get a wicket, he had the GMCC batsmen totally knotted up as his final figures of nine overs four maidens and none for 14 clearly suggests.

His partner, the veteran left-arm, Jahangir Talukdar benefited from his vice-like grip on batsmen at an end, picking three for 27 from his nine over quota.

As the two bowlers gave no leeway to the batsmen, someone among the Biman bowlers had to take the stick and it was Sanjeev Sharma. He took two wickets but gave away 52 runs in the process.

Slow left-armed Enam was, more or less, consistent spending 41 for his two scalps.

Biman began their campaign for their sixth win in eight matches steadily making 29 in ten overs before Mizanur Rahman had one crashing through the defence of Ziaur Rashid (15), who came to open the innings with Jahangir Alam.

One drop Habibul Bashar, the stylish righthander, robbed the GMCC bowlers of any further cheers with some solid batting.

He added 47 runs for the second wicket with the pugnacious Jahangir who fell to off-spinner Sanwar for a 55-ball 33.

A quiet and clinical 80-run partnership after Jahangir's dismissal put GMCC well and truly on course of their third defeat in eight matches.

Habib was not there when Biman got past GMCC's total having fallen for a well compiled 62 off 102 balls.

Haider, who was with Habib all this while, never indulged in any hitting revelry though being more than capable of it but kept enough strike to himself for an unbeaten knock, smacking calm assurance than daring in disdain.

He tipped to 58 off 60 balls with the help of three fours and together with his skipper Enam returned to the pavilion undefeated.

TODAY'S MATCHES

- Gulshan vs Kalabagan (Dhaka Stadium)
- Wari vs Victoria (DCS)



Action from yesterday's Green Delta First Division super league encounter between holders Abahani Krira Chakra and Mariner Youngs at the Hockey Stadium. Abahani won 2-1. — Star photo

Champions recover well

Sports Reporter
Champions Abahani Krira Chakra showed no signs of hangover over their defeat to arch-rivals Mohammedans in their super league opener when they carved out a well-deserved 2-1 victory over their first-leg conquerors Mariner Youngs Club in the lone Green Delta First Division hockey league match at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

National player Mahbub Harun, Abahani's inspirational centre half, opened the account with a field goal as early as in the 30th second.

Mariners, who began their campaign in a roaring fashion drubbing Sonali Bank in their first match, had a fine opportunity to be at par when Indian umpire Wadia awarded them a penalty stroke for an infringement on Mumtaz Haider, Mariner's spearhead who switched this year from Mohammedans.

But Abahani's experienced custodian Rahmatullah dived to his right guiding Biaka Lusa's push out of the cage's perimeter with the match into its third minute.

The prospect of an entertaining match was on cards but Abahani, powered by an imaginative Harun, stole a march on their rivals.

The Dhanmondi outfit created quite a few openings with Zahid Hossain being in the thick of things for most of the time but some way or the other goals eluded them until the 13th minute when Akhtar Hossain, cashing in on a fast build-up, sounded the board.

Stung by this reversal, Mariners stepped on the gas for a break through with Zulfikar, one of six Pakistanis in action on the day — three on each side — providing the inspiration.

Had Mumtaz Haider not allowed his testy temper to get the better of his skills, Mariners would have been better equipped in their comeback campaign.

Yet they reduced margin 15 minutes before half-time when Selim drove the ball home from a penalty corner.

Neither team could score in the second half although Abahani always appeared to be more cohesive of the sides.

They were more organised in defence and imaginative in attack. Mariners' hectic efforts for the equaliser were nullified by their inability to convert the penalty corners. They got five short corners against Abahani's three and not to forget the penalty stroke.

Meanwhile, Mohammedan Sporting Club, who are to feature in a crucial super league encounter against strong Usha Krira Chakra today had their fourth foreign recruit from Pakistan on Thursday.

Ahmad Alam, the second goalkeeper of the Pakistan national team who celebrated his 22nd birthday only two days ago, has joined his more illustrious compatriots superstar Shahbaz Ahmad, Tahir Zaman and Md Irfan, who have already made Dhaka league debut.

Becker blasts Agenor away

MILAN, Italy, Feb 17: Top-seeded Boris Becker downed Haitian qualifier Ronald Agenor 6-4, 6-4 Thursday to earn a quarterfinal berth against his doubles teammate and training partner Guy Forget at the Muratti Time indoor tournament, reports AP.

The German, ranked third on the ATP Tour, took 72 minutes to defeat Agenor at Assago Forum, in a repeat of last year's semifinal.

Forget, the unseeded 30-year-old French veteran, defeated Russian Alexander Volkov 4-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-4 in another second-round match of the Italian tournament, which awards a top prize of \$128,000.

Warming up for their quarterfinal clash in the singles Friday, Becker and Forget teamed for a 6-3, 6-3 victory against the US Swedish pair of Mark Kell and Peter Nyborg in a night doubles match.

Sixth-seeded Petr Korda, a losing finalist in Milan last year, downed Spain's Tomas Carbonell 7-6 (9-7), 6-3 and will take on fellow-Czech Slava Dosedel in the quarters.

Second-seeded Croat Goran Ivanisevic, a wild card entry, served 17 aces on his way to a 7-6 (13-11), 6-4 victory against Frenchman Cedric Pioline.

It was the second season win for Ivanisevic, who's nursing a knee cap injury and was ousted in the first round at the Australian Open and Dubai.

"If I overcome the knee problem, I can shoot for victory in a Grand Slam tournament this year," said Ivanisevic. "When I keep my nerves under control, I can beat everybody."

Michael Stich, the No. 4 seed, defeated Karsten Braasch 6-3, 7-6 (7-3) in an all-German match.

Stich, who will play fifth-seeded Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the next round, faced unexpected problems in the second set, which he won on a tie-breaker.

Becker relied on his serve and broke Agenor in the fifth game of each set to improve to 25-3 at Milan, where he is the defending champion and trying for his fifth title in nine years.

Becker, who attracted the first big crowd in four days at the Forum, had 16 aces and won points on 61 per cent of his second serves.

"It looked like an easy game for me, but it was not," said Becker, who won his 43rd career tournament in Marseille last Sunday.