

Agassi, Sampras meet again

INDIAN WELLS, California, Mar 13: Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi, the top two tennis players in the world, will meet today in the final of the ATP Champions Cup in the first repeat of their Australian Open showdown, reports AFP.

Sampras beat Sweden's Stefan Edberg 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 and Agassi defeated Germany's



ANDRE AGASSI

Boris Becker 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) in Sunday's semi-finals.

While Sampras insured he will not lose the number one spot by reaching the semis, Agassi is undoubtedly the hottest player on the men's

tour right now.

His victory in the Australian Open was his second straight Grand Slam triumph after last year's US Open, and he looked powerful and confident against Becker.

"A lot of fireworks tomorrow, you can count on that," said Agassi, who missed a chance at rematch when both were ousted early from the tournament in Philadelphia last month.

"I came here for this match," Agassi said. "There is a lot in between, but the bottom line is that if I win tomorrow, I walk home feeling like it was a great week. If I don't it was just OK."

Agassi benefitted from Becker's, including two forehand errors in the tiebreaker, one of which gave the American match point.

"I was just trying to forget about that," Becker said. "In the tiebreaker I had many opportunities to finish it off, and I just wasn't able to do that. I played the right shots. I had him off the court and then I missed two easy forehands."

Becker said he had the same problems against Agassi as every other player on the tour.

"He takes the ball very early, and he doesn't give you much time to come into the point," he said. "On the first return or when the rally starts you have to risk going for our shot right away."

Sampras, who overcame a poor first set and a nosebleed later in the match, caused, he said, by the dry weather, said he expected his biggest problem to be Agassi's service return.

"He returns so well, and my best shot is my serve," Sampras said.

He added that Agassi's success of late was only to be expected.



PETE SAMPRAS

pected.

"He always had the talent. I was just a matter of putting it all together," Sampras said. "He obviously has done that in the past eight months."

Maradona the trouble-maker

BUENOS AIRES, Mar 13: Soccer superstar Diego Maradona roched up another scandal Sunday when he was expelled for throwing water at a linesman, reports Reuters.

Maradona, who is still serving a FIFA ban from all soccer for testing positive for banned substances at the 1994 World Cup, is now coach to First Division club Racing.

The diminutive former Argentina captain got angry because the linesman failed to realize a Racing player was waiting to go back into play after sustaining a minor injury.

"To get the linesman — who is deaf — to listen to me, I merely threw a little water at him," Maradona shrugged later.

The linesman complained to the referee, who walked up to the sideline and flashed his red card at the Racing coach.

Maradona walked unhurriedly half-way around the field on his way out, surrounded by a crowd of photographers and policemen and turning his head every few yards to hurl abuse at the referee.

The match, against Independiente, ended a goalless draw.

Sinner's first

COPENHAGEN, Mar 13: Martin Sinner of Germany saved two match points in a second-set tiebreak and went on to beat Andrei Olhovskiy of Russia 6-7 (3-7), 7-6 (10-8), 6-3 Sunday to win the \$128,000 Copenhagen Open for his first ATP tour singles title, reports AP.

"It's always good to win a match saving match points," Sinner said. It feels great to win a big tournament. It's different from winning a Challenger, but I don't think I've understand what has happened yet.

With him serving on the match point, I didn't think I would have a chance. I was lucky."

Sinner, playing his first ATP Tour final, broke Olhovskiy twice in the third set.

Olhovskiy, who didn't lose a set in his first four matches, played his second Copenhagen final. He won the tournament in 1993 for his only ATP Tour singles title.

Mark Keil of the United States and Peter Nyborn of Sweden, who started playing together in the Stockholm Open five months ago, beat Guillaume Roux of France and Greg Rusedski of Canada 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 7-6 (7-3) for their first doubles title as a team. This was their ninth tournament.

ROK may bid for 2003 Summer Varsity Games

SEOUL, Mar 13: The central South Korean City of Taejon said Friday it is considering a bid to host the 2003 Summer University Games, reports AP.

The International amateur competition for university students first opened in 1960, and is held every two years. The 1995 Summer University Games will be held in Fukuoka, Japan.

Taejon city hall said it will dispatch a delegation to the Fukuoka Games to study the requirements and preparations needed to host the Games. Taejon expects to submit its plan to the city legislature for approval shortly after the games, officials said.

The provincial city would need to enlarge its current stadiums and build other facilities if it decides to host the games.

South Korea is already hosting the Winter University Games in 1997. It is also pushing to host the Asian Games and the World Cup soccer finals in 2002.

Taejon's bid is expected to invite criticism over spending money on sports that would be used to build roads and other infrastructure.

Pan American Games US enjoy 'golden harvest'

MAR DEL PLATA, Argentina, Mar 13: The US team vs the hemisphere was a gold-medal split at the swimming and diving pools Sunday, and success in gymnastics, cycling and roller skating made up for another baseball loss at the Pan American Games, reports AP.

The St John's baseball team, representing the United States because an all-star team couldn't be assembled at this time of year, lost its second straight game. As Argentina did the previous day, Mexico jumped to an early lead and beat the Americans 7-2.

Mexico also did well in diving as Fernando Platas upset Americans Mark Bradshaw and Kent Ferguson on the 3-metre springboard. Bradshaw got the silver medal, while Ferguson finished fourth by less than a

Martino of the United States in the 100 freestyle; Seth van Nerden of the United States, in the 100 breaststroke; and by the US team in the women's 800 freestyle relay.

Martino, 27, married and still not sure she wants to swim in the 1996 Olympics or start a family, set a Pan Am record of 55.62 seconds in the 100.

"This time was better than my time at the World Championships last year, so I'm pleased with that, and my husband will be pleased she said. "We still have a decision to make together."

Both of the non-American swimming golds were resounding victories.

Gustavo Borges of Brazil, who will swim for Michigan at the NCAA championships next

team of Dady Vincent, Trina Jackson, Catherine Fox and Cristina Teuscher won in 8:07.30, shattering the US team's Pan Am record by 4.17 seconds. Canada also was under the previous record at 8:08.25, and Argentina was far back in third.

Cyclists Clay Moseley and Dede Demet, both Americans, won gold medals in the individual time trials.

Among other Americans, Derek Parra and Chad Hedrick took gold men's speed roller skating, while Cheryl Ezzell was a winner in the women's competition.

The American women's volleyball team fared better than the baseball players against the hosts, routing Argentina in three games. The US soccer squad was, in turn, routed by the heavily favoured hosts, 3-0, at night.

Argentina dominated from the outset, using its quickness and crisp ballhandling to set up shot after shot on the US goal in a game played almost entirely on the American side of the field. The winners scored on a pair of first-half penalty kicks to clinch the match.

The St John's Red Storm again was blown over in the first innings. The first four Mexicans scored behind six walks and only one hit.

It didn't get much better. Three times, innings ended with St John's baserunners getting picked off. The Americans gave up 14 walks.

Surprising Argentina, which participated in baseball only in the first games in 1951, moved to 2-0 by edging Puerto Rico 4-3.

In diving, Platas, separated by less than a point with Ferguson for three rounds of the 3-metre springboard event, beat Ferguson by a whopping 40 points in the eighth round to take a commanding lead.

Bradshaw, miffed when Cuban fans cheered Ferguson's poor dive earlier in the eighth round, jumped from fifth place to second in that round, while Ferguson dropped from first to sixth.

Platas, sixth in the world championships in 1993 and 17th in the 1992 Olympics while still recovering from a broken left wrist, won the gold medal with 661.80 points.

Bradshaw, of Galloway, Ohio, was second with 624.93 and David Bedard of Canada won the bronze medal with 609.63.

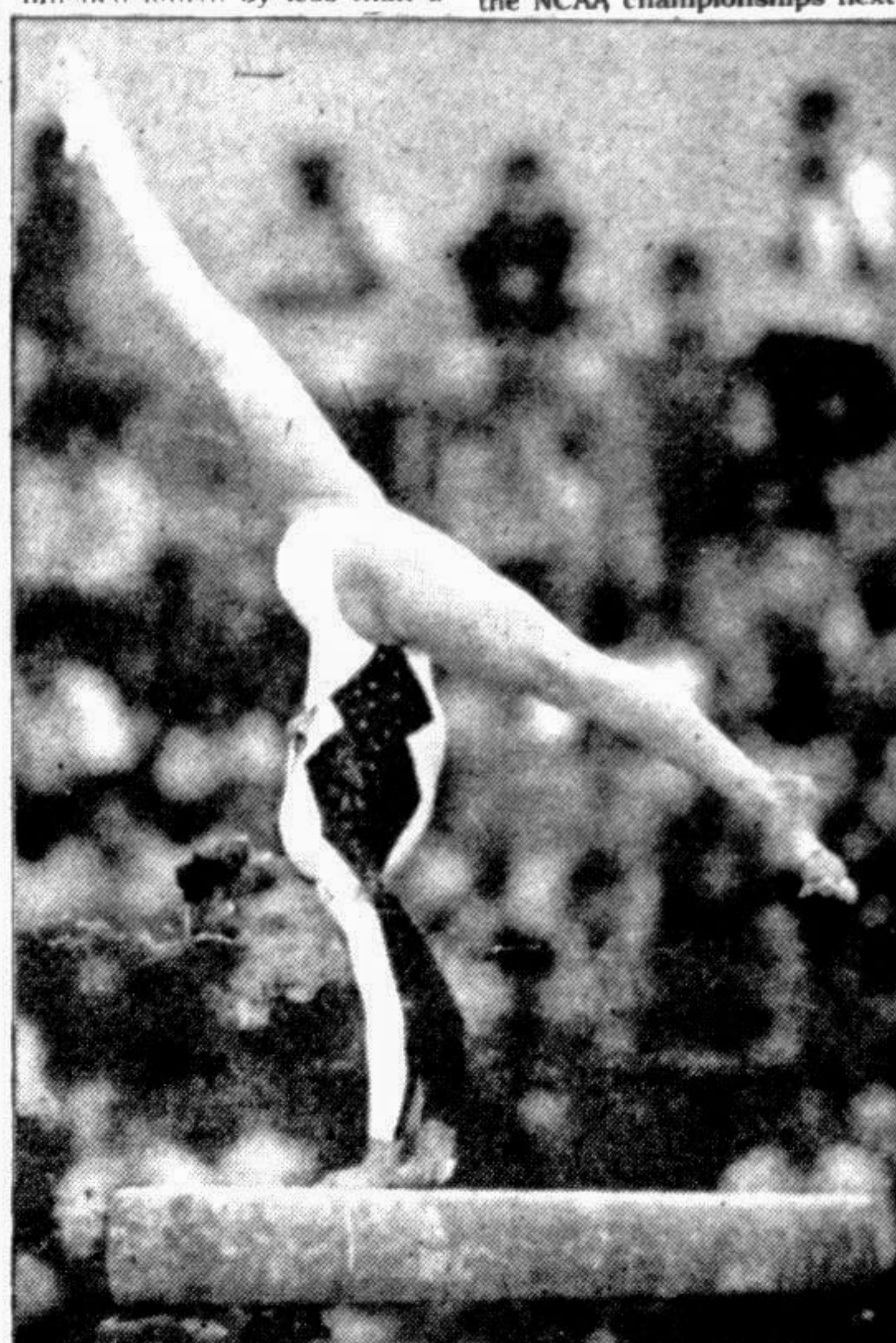
Ferguson missed the bronze by just 0.42 points.

"It's not a surprise that he won," Bradshaw said of Platas. "He's always been a great talent."

Bradshaw and Ferguson have not competed since last September, and have pointed to the World Cup meet in Atlanta as the most important event before the Olympic trials next year.

"We're just coming out of our offseason," Bradshaw said. "The 5-foot, 3 3/4 inch (161 cm) Platas said he was looking for an important victory in the year before the Olympics.

"This is the start of a new part of my career," he said. "There is no athlete, that doesn't dream of winning an Olympic medal. That is what I'm looking to do next year."



Shannon Miller of the United States performs her routine on the balance beam during the women's team competition at the Pan American Games in Mar del Plata, Argentina on Mar 12. The Americans took the team gold followed by Cuba and the hosts in third. — AFP/UNB photo

point.

The US women's gymnastics team, led by Olympic medalist Shannon Miller shattered the games record with 388.375 points to take the gold.

"Today we competed as a team and stuck together," said Amanda Borden of Cincinnati, who was second to Miller in the individual standings, which don't count for a medal. "To not count any falls was our goal, and to break the Pan Am record was great."

The Americans had a great first full day and lead the medals table with 30, including 10 golds. The Cubans also have 10 golds and 20 total medals.

A Brazilian and a Canadian won gold medals in swimming to go with victories by Angel

week, won the 200 freestyle in a games record 1 minute, 48.49 seconds. Americans Greg Burgess and Josh Davis captured second and third.

Jeanne Malar of Canada was just as impressive in the 400 individual medley, breaking one of the seven Pan Am women's records left over from 1979. She was timed in 4:43.64, nearly 2.5 seconds faster than Tracy Caulkins' mark. Americans Alison Pealey and Jennifer Kurth won the silver and bronze.

Van Nerden won the 100 breaststroke in 1:02.48. Canada's Jon Cleveland was second and Tyler Mayfield of

Las Vegas was third as every US swimmer who competed won a medal, nine in all.

The US 800-meter relay

Graf masters Martinez

DELRAY BEACH, Florida, Mar 13: Steffi Graf proved to herself and the tennis world that her injury-forced comeback is on track after defeating Conchita Martinez in the finals Sunday of the Delray Beach Championships, reports AP.

Graf, the top seed, who has won this tournament four consecutive years and six times since 1987, weathered the weeklong blustery conditions, and a formidable opponent. She defeated the second-seeded Martinez 6-2, 6-4, for her 88th career title and a \$129,000 paycheck.

"We both had problems this week at the Delray Beach Windy Championship," said Graf, playing only her second tournament this year.

Graf, 25, who is 10-1 against Martinez, took control of the match early by breaking her serve twice in her first two service games. Martinez, a master of spin, trailed 2-4, 30-40, when she attempted an ill-advised drop-shot.

Graf, who seems fully recovered from a six-month bout

with back and calf muscle injuries, pounced on it and backhanded it down the line for one of her 15 winners and a 5-2 lead.

"She was getting to my balls pretty good," said Martinez, 22, who earned \$13,500.

"I couldn't play like I knew I could play," said Martinez, the fourth-ranked player in the world. "Steffi was too strong today."

Martinez grabbed a 4-3 lead in the second set, but at 4-4, 30-40, Graf achieved the critical break when she ran Martinez side-to-side with penetrating groundstrokes, took the net, and forced her into a forehand error.

Graf, not known for her net game, ended the match on an atypical low-bending backhand volley she placed perfectly into the vacated corner.

"It was a very strange tournament, very difficult conditions" said Graf, referring to the wind and the 11 players that pulled out due to injuries or sickness. "It's not what I like but you have to play. You have to concentrate. It's a good lineup for Lipton."

"She played unbelievable. She didn't make any mistakes and was able to control the wind."

Graf, who is 9-0 this year and has not lost a set, served out the first set at love, after



STEFFI GRAF

Niemann's delightful double

HAMAR, Mar 13: Germany's Gunda Niemann set a track record Sunday as she wrapped up the 1,500-metre women's World Cup speedskating title, and then went on to conquer the 3,000, reports AP.

And after a season that surprised even himself, Neal Marshall of Canada took the men's 1,500 crown, while American Bonnie Blair left the World Cup circuit in style, winning her final 500-metre race on Sunday as well as strong third-place showing in the 1,500.

Weary Iantje Ritsma of the Netherlands, on the other hand, complained of a bad day, finishing seventh in the 10,000 a day after claiming the distance (5,000-10,000-metre) crown.

"I have a very good season until this competition but it doesn't matter now," said Ritsma, who also finished sixth in the 1,500. "My legs were totally empty. The season is too long."

Teammate Bart Veldkamp won Sunday's 10,000 race in 14 minutes, 6.24 seconds, with Kjell Storelid of Norway second 4.86 seconds back.

"It was like a hunt, but he is the hunter and I am the hunted," said Veldkamp about Storelid. "But I knew he was coming and I was waiting."

Veldkamp finished third in the men's distance World Cup standings, two points behind Keiji Shirahata of Japan.

Niemann, who swept all four races at last weekend's women's World Championships and won Saturday's 3,000 to wrap up the distance World Cup title, maintained her winning streak to make for the perfect end to her season.

"I am very happy," she said. "I didn't believe at the start of the season that I could do so well in so many distances."

Niemann won the 1,500 in a track record of 2:01.71, 2.19 seconds ahead of Lyudmila Prokashva of Kazakhstan. That gave Niemann the 1,500 title, to go along with the 3,000-5,000 crown.

Niemann won Sunday's 3,000 in 7:19.63, 6.75 seconds ahead of Dutchwoman Carla Zijlstra. Zijlstra was second in the 3,000 title chase, ahead of Elena Belci del Parra of Italy.

Five-time Olympic champion Blair, who is retiring after races in Calgary next week,

said Sunday's victory and third-place was the perfect way to part with the World Cup.

"It was nice to be on the podium again in that (1,500) race when the race usually isn't that strong for me," said Blair.

Blair came from behind to skate Sunday's 500 in 39.38 seconds, and beat rival Susan Auch of Canada in the final pair. Auch finished in 39.38 seconds.

Marshall took the men's 1,500 crown with 195 points, after finishing second Sunday in 1:53.62. Ritsma's sixth place cost him the title, allowing

Goulet passes away

TOMS RIVER, New Jersey, Mar 13: Alfred T. Goulet, a world-record setter in professional bicycle racing early this century, died Saturday at a retirement home here. He was 103, reports AP.

His peak bicycling years were between 1910 and 1920. He was known for his endurance, which led him to a world record of 1:49.8 in the 50-mile (80 km) race — a mark that still stands.

Marshall to beat him out by two points.

"I'm a little surprised," Marshall said. "At the beginning of the year I didn't expect to win, that's for sure. I was hoping to get a few top finishes in the 1,500 which was my best distance last year."

The day also held surprises for the Norwegian hosts, accustomed to winning the distance events but ended up winning the sprints instead.

Norwegian Aadne Soendrael edged Marshall to take the 1,500, in 1:53.56.

"I decided to skate a 1,000 and then add another 500," Soendrael said.

In the men's 500, Hiroyasu Shimizu of Japan lost his balance coming out of the first turn, and the wobble slowed him enough to enable Roger Stroem to win Norway's first 500-metre World Cup victory in 36.42.

"At the end of the first curve, my left edge sort of slipped and I lost my balance. A little afterwards, I lost my balance again and almost fell," Shimizu said.

Shimizu took the season title anyway, finishing second by .06, enough to beat out countryman Mahabu Horii, who was fifth in Sunday's race.



Sampdoria's Rued Gullit tries to get round Parma's Faustino Asprilla during their Italian First Division league encounter in Parma on Mar 12. — AFP/UNB photo

Argentina's war against drugs

MAR DEL PLATA, Argentina, Mar 13: The Argentinian government has launched an attack on drug abuse in sport aimed at athletes from 47 countries taking part in the Pan American Games here, reports AFP.

Competitors are invited to "condemn" drug abuse in a campaign driven by a recent study which shows widespread use of anabolic steroids in the United States.

Glossy handouts produced by the government are distributed at each venue bearing anti-drug slogans asking competitors to "say no to drugs."

The handouts recall the biggest drug scandal to affect the four-yearly Games, at Indianapolis in 1987, when a string of weightlifters were disqualified for failing dope tests.

No cases were revealed four years ago in Havana where testing was carried out by the laboratories in Barcelona, Spain, site of the 1992 Olympics.

The same Laboratory, officially recognised by the International Olympic Committee, is in use again this time in conjunction with the Buenos Aires lab.

The Buenos Aires government has highlighted the drug problem in sport by using US statistics which claim that one million US sportsmen and women use drugs which are readily available at gymsnasiums.

The report claims that 80 per cent of American footballers and 56 per cent of athletes aged 17-25 "have used anabolic steroids at least once."

"In Argentina, their use had increased sharply in recent years. These substances are widespread in gyms," says the handout.

Anabolic steroids stimulate the body's production of protein and increase muscle strength and bulk. The handout outlines the risk of using the drug, including potentially fatal cardiovascular and liver problems.

Tadesse wins Rome Marathon

ROME, Mar 13: Ethiopian Belayneh Tadesse led an African sweep by winning the Rome Marathon on Sunday in a time of two hours 10 minutes and 13 seconds, reports Reuters.

Tadesse defeated Salum Ikaji to Tanzania by 12 seconds with Jillo Dube, another Ethiopian, finishing third in a race which began and ended in the shadow of the colosseum.

Russian veteran Elena Sipatov, 37, was the first woman to cross the line, clocking 2:37.46.

Irina Sklyarenko of Ukraine was second and American Roxie Erickson finished third.

ISU's initiative

BIRMINGHAM, Mar 13: In a major counter-offensive to the made-for-TV explosion in figure skating, the International Skating Union Council on Saturday announced plans for expanded open competitions, a Grand Prix circuit and the introduction of prize money, reports AP.

Beginning with the 1995-96 season, the ISU will expand its number of open international competitions from two to eight. Any pro, amateur, eligible or ineligible skater is allowed to enter.

The Grand Prix, open to eligible skaters only, will be staged at five major skating countries, the United States, Canada, Germany, Japan and France, with the leading skaters going through to a final.

The ISU also will award prize money in all its competitions, including the World Championships.

The moves, announced by ISU president Ottavio Cincinatti, are aimed at uniting the top stars of figure skating in the same competitions.

"The message is plain," he said. "To eligible skaters it is please don't become ineligible. To the ineligible skaters, it is please come back."

Bournissen plans to retire

LENZERHEID, Switzerland, Mar 13: Swiss downhill veteran Charal Bournissen announced Saturday that she will retire from the ski circuit at the end of this season, reports AP.

Bournissen, 28, won seven World Cup victories — six downhill and one super giant slalom — during her career. Her first win was in 1987, her last in 1993.

She has suffered from injuries in the past two seasons and is currently trailing 41st in the overall standings and 16th in the downhill standings.

Bournissen announced her retirement after finishing 19th in a World Cup downhill event Saturday.

WORLD INDOORS NOTEBOOK

BARCELONA, Mar 13 (AP): Look for the southern city of Seville to be a strong candidate for the 1999 World Outdoor Track Championships, adding to a growing list of major track competitions in Spain.

Spain is fast becoming a European track hub following the 1989 World Cup in Bracelona, the 1991 World Indoor Championships in Seville and the '92 Olympics and this year's World Indoors in Barcelona.

Seville's plans call for a 60,000-seat stadium on the site of its 1992 World's Fair. Ground could be broken early next year if at least one of the city's two professional soccer clubs — FC Sevilla and Real Betis — agrees to play there. Both clubs now have their own stadiums.

Jose Maria Odriozola, head of the Spanish track federation, suggested rival bids for '99 might come from China, South Korea, Greece or South Africa, but he said the IAAF had reacted "very favorably" to Seville's interest.

Seville's solid bid doesn't seem to be threatened by an attempt by Madrid to replace Mexico City for the 1997 World Outdoor Championships. The Mexican capital is expected to bow out in just a matter of days because of the country's financial crisis.

"Right now all is in the realm of speculation, and I don't want to get into speculation," Odriozola said. "Mexico City is still the host. I will say it would be very difficult to organize in such a short time. We would have to evaluate a lot of things."

Odriozola declined to comment directly on Madrid replacing Mexico City, but said the world competition would be difficult to organize in just two years, stressing Seville's three years of planning.

LIVID LINFORD: World and Olympic 100-metre champion Linford Christie has demanded the resignation of IAAF spokesman Christopher Winner.

The British sprinter is upset over comments Winner made after Christie withdrew from the World Indoor Championships. Winner criticized Christie for withdrawing at such late notice, saying he had damaged the image of the sport.

Christie, who is attending the championships as a spectator, called Winner a "worm" when the two crossed paths in a hotel lobby Friday night.

"The only thing you can do is resign your position," Christie said.

Winner, who offered a public apology to Christie earlier in the week, said he had no intention of resigning. However, some IAAF officials are worried the dispute could jeopardize Christie's participation in future events.

RAPID REGIS: John Regis didn't waste any time in leaving Barcelona — even before his event was finished as a hamstring injury caused him to pull out of the 200 competition.

Regis was already back in England by the time the 200 semifinals were run Saturday evening after taking an afternoon flight.

Regis coasted in his opening heat of the 200 Friday and advanced with a time of 21.21, finishing behind Torbjorn Eriksson of Sweden, also timed in 21.21.

The Regis was second in the semifinals to eventual champion Geir Moen of Norway. Regis ran 20.94.

However, Regis hurt his hamstring in a meet in Stockholm two weeks ago and said his leg had tightened up after he woke up on Saturday. He also had to pull out of the European Championships last August in Helsinki.

Regis had the best time of the athletes entered in the 200 with 20.47 as his British teammate, Linford Christie and Namibia's Frankie Fredericks were not entered. Christie set the world record of 20.25 earlier this season.

FALSE STARTS: If they counted world records for false starts, the eight Saturday in the second heat of the men's 60 heptathlon could be the new standard.

Nobody was disqualified because no one single athlete had as many as three false starts, the quota for multiple-sport events. Athletes are out after two false starts in other events.