

Mizan steals the show

Sports Reporter



Striker Mizan once again played the role of a saviour with a 80th minute strike that gave Muktiyoddha Sangsad a lone goal win over holders Abahani Krira Chakra in one of the two Nirma DMFA Cup football tournament engagements at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

But the outcome of the day's second match, merely reflected the course of action with Muktiyoddha at the receiving end for most of the proceedings against a spirited display by the sky blues.

It was only in the last part of the second half when the star-studded Muktiyoddha, who were needing at least a draw to earn a berth in the last four, played purposefully with Rumi Rizvi Karim operating from the middle.

The former national midfielder, who came on as a substitute for an out of form Babu Das after the breather, provided a perfect through pass to Mizan, who after receiving the ball from apparently off-side position, sprinted through the right flank before unleashing a fierce right-footer from the edge of the box that zoomed past a diving Abahani custodian Saidul at the near post.

Mizan, the deceptive national striker, who had earlier scored the all-important goal in Muktiyoddha's 1-0 win over Victoria Sporting Club on Friday, then set his side for yet another goal in the 87th minute when, Abahani's defender Monem Munna brought him down in the forbidden zone.

But Rakib, one of the eight national booters in Muktiyoddha's ranks, sent the 12-yarder wide off the mark much to the horror of his teammates.

For Abahani, although the defeat came as a shock, they still finished atop from Group A by virtue of a better goal difference.

The win now leaves Muktiyoddha at par with Abahani, both collecting six points from their three group league matches, but they have to be satisfied with the second position.

Both the teams will now have to wait for the outcome of today's match between Mohammedan Sporting Club and Brothers Union to know their semifinal pairings.

Abahani could have led the first half by at least three goals. The Dhanmondi outfit, playing with young and spirited booters, took the control of the match from the start and could have led the first half by at least three goals.

Sergei, who celebrated his Dhaka football debut scoring the only goal in Abahani's 1-0 win over Victoria Sporting Club on May 3, drew first blood

in the 11th minute with a spectacular volley from well outside the box.

But Pannu, the Muktiyoddha custodian and the reserve national goalkeeper, was equal to the task diving to his left.

Pannu then made two more brilliant saves keeping the freedom fighters afloat. He



Muktiyoddha custodian Pannu, who made several brilliant saves on the day, thwarts yet another Abahani attack collecting the ball before striker Biplob (Islam).

Referee: Sk. Badruddin.

The other match of the day between East End Club and Victoria SC ended in a one-all draw.

The result meant, East End Club, which beat Muktiyoddha Sangsad earlier by a solitary goal, finished third in the four-team Group A securing four points from three outings.

TODAY'S MATCHES
Farashganj vs Rahmatganj (5 pm)
Mohammedan SC vs Brothers Union (7 pm).

GROUP A TABLE

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	P
Abahani KC	3	2	0	1	6	1	6
Muktiyoddha	3	2	0	1	2	1	6
East End Club	3	1	1	1	2	6	4
Victoria SC	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

US, Cuba make safe debut



BERLIN, May 7: On a busy opening night that saw 38 fights on two rings, US and Cuban teams made successful starts at the World Amateur Boxing Championships Saturday, reports AP.

The powerful Cuban team, which has dominated major championships over the past decade, began in similar style when flyweight Raul Gonzalez scored an easy 8-6 decision over Rustanhodzha Rahimov of Tajikistan.

The only American fighter in action was Davarvill Williamson, a heavyweight from Phoenix, Arizona, who scored a 9-4 decision over Georgios Stefanopoulos of Greece.

Stefanopoulos finished 1994 as the fourth-ranked amateur heavyweight, while Williamson, a football and basketball college player, is in his first major event.

But the Greek took eight counts in second and third rounds and could not shake the much taller American.

"I thought I was a little rusty and I was nervous after the draw. I had to learn to keep my hands up a little bit more," Williamson said after the fight.

"I noticed he was shorter when we got into the ring and I tried to use my height," he said.

Only one defending champion got the hour of boxing on the opening night and he too was successful.

Nshan Munchian of Armenia began the defence of his light flyweight (48 kilograms) division title with a 10-5 points decision over Pal Lakatos of Hungary. Munchian won the gold medal at the 1993 Worlds in Tampere, Finland.

Apart from Williamson's victory, what also pleased the Americans was the draw.

Partex b'ball

Lalbagh edged past Eagles by 79-66 points in one of the two Partex First Division basketball league matches at the Dhanmondi basketball gymnasium yesterday, reports UNB.

The winners led the first half 49-39. Khayer caged highest 26 points for Lalbagh.

In the other game of the day the Gregs Club beat Dhoomketu Club 60-48 after they led the first session 27-26.

Kajal scored 17 points for the Gregs.

S Africans pugilists knock out Colombians

JOHANNESBURG, May 7: South Africans defeated Colombians in twin IBF title fights Saturday as Mbulelo Botile knocked out bantamweight champion Harold Mestre and Vuyani Bungu retained his junior featherweight crown over Victor Llerena, reports AP.

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TEAMS

MUKTIYODDHA SANGSAD
KC: Pannu, Emdadul, Moon, Ata, Masud Rana, Mamun Joarder, Zakir, Raquib, Gaus (Naquib), Babu Das (Rumi) and Mizan.

ABAHANI KC: Saidul, Mansoor Ali, Monem Munna, Ali Mansoor, Partha, Iqbal, Joy

Hyderabad's streak ends

The visiting Hyderabad Under-16 team recorded their first ever win here beating Bangladesh Colts by 51 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday after suffering three consecutive defeats, reports UNB.

Opted to bat first, Hyderabad piled up 169 for eight in the stipulated 40 overs with middle order Santosh Yadav scoring highest 65 runs of 75 balls. His innings featured seven firm hits to the fence.

Deepak Lal with 34, skipper Sanjay Patel 22 and opener Srikanth (18) were the other double-digit scores.

Kamal Ibrahim of Colts captured three for 31 while Tassabur took two for 24 runs.

In reply Colts were all out for 118 runs in 31.3 overs. Sezan top scored with 30 runs.

Yadav was also successful with the ball as he captured four wickets for only three runs. Mani Mohan and Sandeep Kumar captured two each for 25 runs.

Referees run risk

ATHENS, May 7: The Greek government will meet football club owners on Monday to discuss ways of curbing continuing violence in the sport which culminated in the brutal beating of a referee last week, reports Reuters.

As a mark of protest referees refuse to officiate at matches today which wiped out the entire programme of games in the top four division of the Greek League. The Greek Football Federation backed the referees protest and re-scheduled the games for Wednesday.

Greek sport under-secretary George Lianis has called for a meeting of all First Division club owners on Monday to discuss measures against sports violence.

The referees decided on their boycott as a protest against the beating of Philippos Bakas by eight AEK Athens fans last weekend.

Nash humbles Hampshire

LONDON, May 7: New Zealand all-rounder Dion Nash captured five for 35 on Saturday as Middlesex crushed Hampshire by 205 runs with 14 overs and a day to spare in their English county championship match at Lord's reports Reuters.

Nash, who was signed for Middlesex largely on the strength of his 11 wickets in the Lord's Test last year, took three for eight in 20 balls as Hampshire tumbled to 242 all out in their second innings.

Only Robin Smith, fighting to regain his England place, stood firm with 75 including 13 boundaries.

Earlier Mark Ramprakash further enhanced his claims for place in this year's series against West Indies with an unbeaten 163 in Middlesex's second innings 427 for six declared, bringing his first-class total for the season to 488 in four completed innings.

Yorkshire also completed a victory on the third day of the four-day matches, defeating Leicestershire by nine wickets.

Leicestershire, who resumed at 102 for five, forced the visitors to bat again by reaching 221. Yorkshire reached their victory target of 37 inside nine overs.

Derbyshire's Devon Malcolm and Dominic Cork both came close to hat-tricks at Trent Bridge as in an absorbing struggle with Nottinghamshire.

The pace pair combined to send Nottinghamshire sliding from 260 for four in their second innings to 302 all out with Malcolm taking three for 57 and Cork pressing his claims for an England place with four for 65 to give him a match aggregate of eight for 116. At the close Derbyshire, chasing 235 for their second championship win, were 24 for one.

Pierce joins Italian Open



ROME, May 7: Mary Pierce of France, battling to overcome health problems, is a welcome late addition to the women's Italian Open which begins on the clay courts of the Foro Italico on Monday, reports Reuters.

The Australian Open champion requested a wild card entry to Rome after illness forced her to drop out of a tournament in Hamburg a few days ago.

Pierce withdrew from her second round match with German Petra Begerow feeling tired and dizzy and was diagnosed as suffering from a kidney infection.

She is seeking to prove her fitness and also to enjoy some match practice on clay ahead of the French Open which begins later this month.

Top ranked Steffi Graf is now the only women from the world's top four who will be



MARY PIERCE took the title in 1987 but has

skipped the tournament in recent years.

Closest rival Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain, preparing to defend her French Title at Roland Garros, returns for a fresh assault on a tournament she has never won.

Fellow-spaniard Conchita Martinez, the Wimbledon champion and world number four, is seeking a hat-trick of titles after triumphing here in 1993 and defeating Martina Navratilova in the 1994 final.

Argentine Gabriela Sabatini, a favourite with the Roman crowd, comes to the Italian capital fresh from a week's holiday on the island of Ischia, in the bay of Naples.

Sabatini has won the Italian Open four times but will be seeking to make amends for a second round exit last year.

Now ranked seventh, Sabatini will be the fourth seed. The top eight women all get an automatic bye into the second round.

A Sino-Sweden showdown



TIANJIN, China, May 7: China's chunky world number two Wang Tao, spurred on by a fanatical home crowd, bounced back to his brilliant best today to steer China into the men's team final at the World Table Tennis Championships, reports Reuters.

The favourites, stretched to five matches for the first time in the tournament by a tenacious South Korean team, will on Monday meet defending champions Sweden, who defeated France 3-1 in another epic struggle.

While Wang produced the stuff of champions at just the right time, France's world number four Jean-Philippe Gatien continued his Chinese nightmare by losing twice, the first to 1992 Olympic champion Jan-Ove Waldner which levelled the tie at 1-1.

Wang, 27, who had blamed his lacklustre form on the stadium lighting, was on fire in both his matches and in the decider against world number five Kim Taek-Soo produced some of the best table tennis of the competition.

He had earlier silenced the South Korean supporters' drums by easily winning the first match of the tie 21-17, 21-9 against world number 14 Yoo Nam-Kyu.

But after two shock defeats for China's number two Ma Wenge at the hands of Kim and Yoo, the pressure was on Wang in the decider against the world's best pen-hold grip player.

The result was never in doubt, with Wang running away with the first game 21-14, and smashing his way past the bemused Kim, to clinch the second 21-16 after taking a 17-7 lead.

Koyama — Chinese or Jap?



TIANJIN, China, May 7: Former Chinese national player Chire Koyama, branded a traitor by sections of the local media after switching her allegiance to Japan, has withdrawn from the World Table Tennis Championships because of a stomach complaint, reports Reuters.

Koyama, who won the women's singles title at the 1987 championships, was lambasted in China after beating world number one Deng Yaping in the singles final at the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima.

The 31-year-old Shanghai-born Koyama was not eligible to play for Japan in the team competition but was expected to prove troublesome for her former Chinese teammates in the singles event which start on Wednesday.

Japanese team leader

Nohira Takao confirmed to reporters today that Koyama was in an Osaka hospital and had officially withdrawn.

"She was taken into hospital after practice on May 5 suffering from a stomach problem. I received a facsimile from her doctor on Saturday night confirming that she was too ill to play," he said.

"It's disappointing for the Japanese team as we had high hopes that she would win a medal in the women's singles."

Koyama's career path has been strewn with controversy. She was axed from the Chinese team after the 1987 World Championships for refusing to throw a match against a compatriot, even although she went on to win the title.

After moving to Japan in 1989 she became less active in the sport but started training seriously again for the 1994 Asian Games. Her win over Deng in an emotional final took the shine off their haul of 137 gold medals and triggered patriotic rhetoric from the Chinese press.

The Beijing Youth News questioned how a woman with

"pure Chinese blood in her veins" and raised on Chinese food, could stand proudly under a Japanese flag at the medal ceremony in Hiroshima.

Another commentary in the same paper added: "So this is how she repays her motherland, her coaches, her teammates and all of her compatriots — really beautiful."

Before the start of this World Championships Deng said she was determined to gain her revenge against overseas Chinese like Koyama.

"The major threat to us will come from former Chinese nationals living in and playing for other countries."

"Fast Eddy" shines again

ROMORANTIN, France, May 7: Dutchman Eddy Smulders regained the European lightweight boxing title with a unanimous points decision over Frenchman Christophe Girard on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Smulders lost the title last year to another Frenchman, Fabrice Tiozzo, who gave up his belt to challenge WBC champion Mike McCallum of Jamaica. The 31-year-old Dutchman, nicknamed "Fast Eddy," did not miss this opportunity to shine again.

Far too strong for Girard in a category in which most European stars snub European bouts for world title fights, he outclassed the Frenchman in the first five rounds and held his lead in the last seven.

Girard was knocked down at the end of the second round but was saved by the bell. He resisted bravely from then on, sometimes disturbing Smulders with right hooks.

But the dutchman, who scored his 29th career victory, had scored too many points at the start. The judges gave him a victory by scores of 117-111, 117-113 and 118-112 points.

Martinez halts Hingis

HAMBURG, May 7: Conchita Martinez, the Wimbledon champion, put on a powerful display of clay-court tennis to overwhelm Martina Hingis, the 14-year-old prodigy, 6-1, 6-0 and win the Citizen Cup Sunday, reports AP.

Hingis was overcome by stage fright in her first professional final and produced a series of unforced errors that made Martinez' job easier.

The Spaniard, ranked fourth, in the world and seeded second, won in 49 minutes to collect the winner's check of 79,000 dollars.

"Right now I feel unbeatable," said the 23-year-old from Barcelona. "I can play well on all surfaces but clay remains my favourite surface."

Hingis, who has been on the pro-tour for six months, reached the final by beating three higher ranked players — Judith Wiesner, Jana Novotna and Anke Huber.

But the Swiss teen aged had no chance against Martinez. Hingis tried to change the pace and to put pressure on Martinez, but she was too inconsistent and made far too many errors to be able to trouble Martinez.

Hingis had to settle for the runner-up prize of 35,000 dollar and will climb from No 60 in the rankings to a place in the top 30.

"I was very happy to play here and I am already looking forward to next year. I am very pleased with what I achieved here," she said.

Martinez is unbeaten in 16 matches since she took on Carlos Kirmayr as coach in mid-March.

"I am playing very well at the moment," she said. It was the second Spanish victory in a row in the 430,000 dollar tournament at Hamburg's Rothenbaum club. Arantxa Sanchez Vicario won last year.

Hingis, a Wimbledon and French Open junior champion, dropped her serve to trail 2-0 and never recovered. Martinez broke once more to cruise through the set.

The Swiss crumbled after losing the first game of the second set by dropping her serve again.

She hit an overhead smash but Martinez replied with a tremendous cross-court winner that demolished any resistance Hingis had left.

Martinez wasted two match points but scored on the third by hitting a forehand that caught Hingis on the wrong foot.

Stich faces Ferreira in final

MUNICH, May 7: Holder Michael Stich and fourth seed Wayne Ferreira of South Africa both defeated clay-court specialists Saturday to reach the Sunday final at the 425,000 dollar ATP Tournament here, reports AP.

Stich, the third seed and local sporting idol after the first round exit of Boris Becker, crushed Uruguay's Marcelo Filippini 6-4, 6-3 in 72 minutes.

Meanwhile, Ferreira beat Alex Corretja 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 in a contest lasting for more than two hours at the Iphitos Club.

Such has been on a career-long winning streak at home events, claiming six of his 15 ATP Tour title in Germany.

He took a step towards a possible seventh victory in his win over Filippini. "I seem to do well in Germany, but I'm not counting on anything," he said. "This week I've been taking it match-by-match."

The German was untroubled by the 27-year-old clay court specialist, whom he has never played. Stich made an early break in the first set and won it when he cut off a return with a stinging volley at the net.

In the second set, he began with a break of Filippini, ranked 79th on the ATP Tour list and moved smoothly to the win.

The German said, however, he could not remain satisfied. "There is always something in my game that needs to be improved," he said. "I've gotten better in each of my matches this week. I just want to keep doing that."

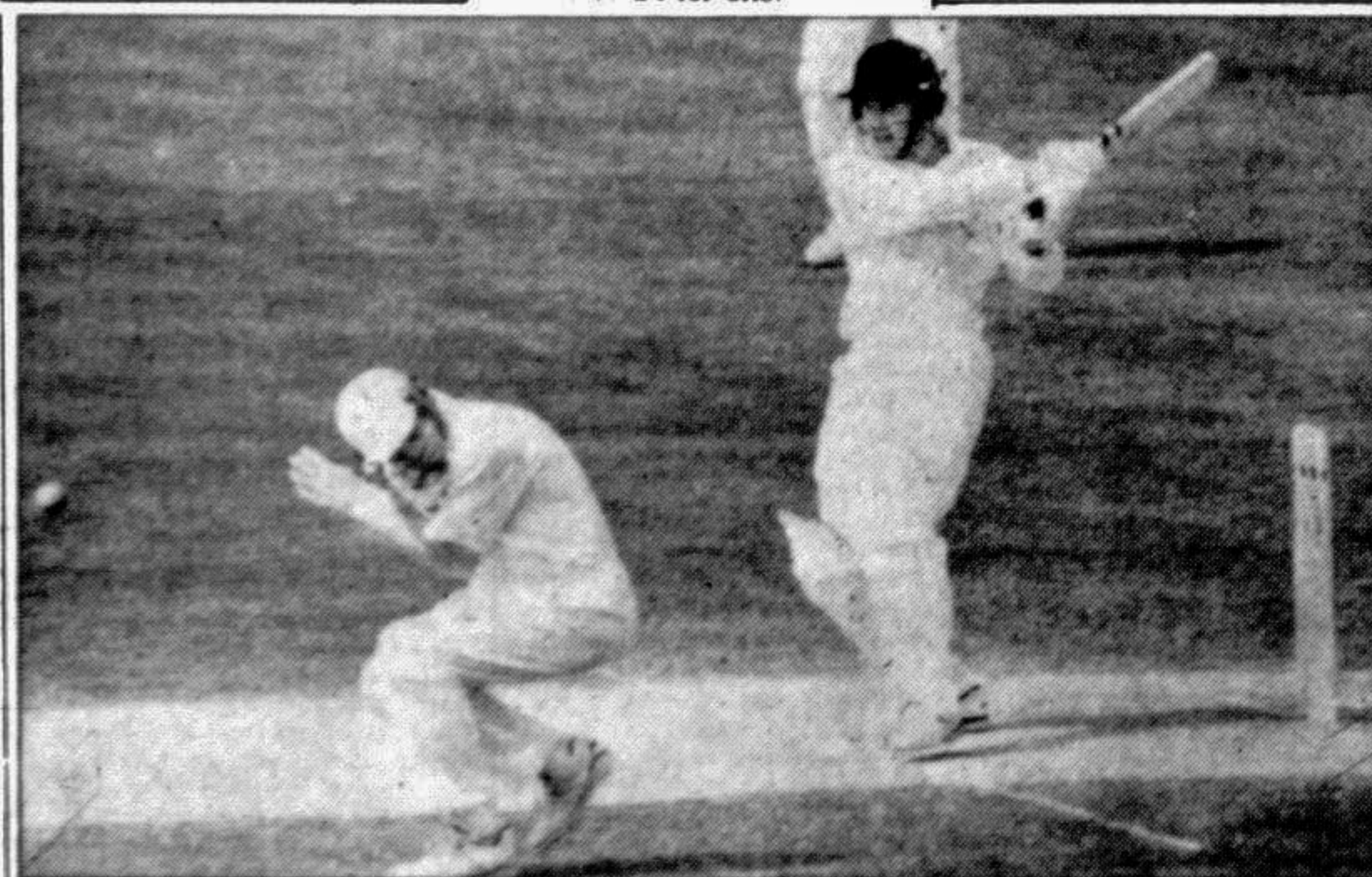
Saen defends WBA crown

BANGKOK, May 7: Thailand's World Boxing Association (WBA) flyweight champion Saen Sor Ploenchit retained his title today with a unanimous points decision over Evangelio Perez of Panama in the southern Thai town of Songkhla, reports Reuters.

Friendly soccer

TAEQU, South Korea, May 7: Brazil's Botafogo beat the South Korean Olympic team 2-0 (halftime 1-0) in a friendly soccer match today, reports Reuters.

Scorers — Paulo Silveira Andrade (24th minute), Alexandre da Silva (54th). Attendance — 30,000.



Hampshire batsman VP Terry cracks the ball towards the long-on region while Middlesex fielder makes a quick attempt to save himself during their Britannic Assurance match at Lord's on May 6.

— AFP/UNB photo