

Maradona's legacy lives on



RIO DE JANEIRO, May 13: Diego Maradona may be a volatile superstar prone to sudden and wild changes of temperament but the players he left behind when he resigned as coach of Racing Club say he makes an ideal boss, reports Reuters.

Maradona walked out on the Argentine club last Saturday after four months in charge, one week of which he was missing and twenty days of which he spent on leave, when club president Juan de Stefano failed to gain re-election on Saturday.

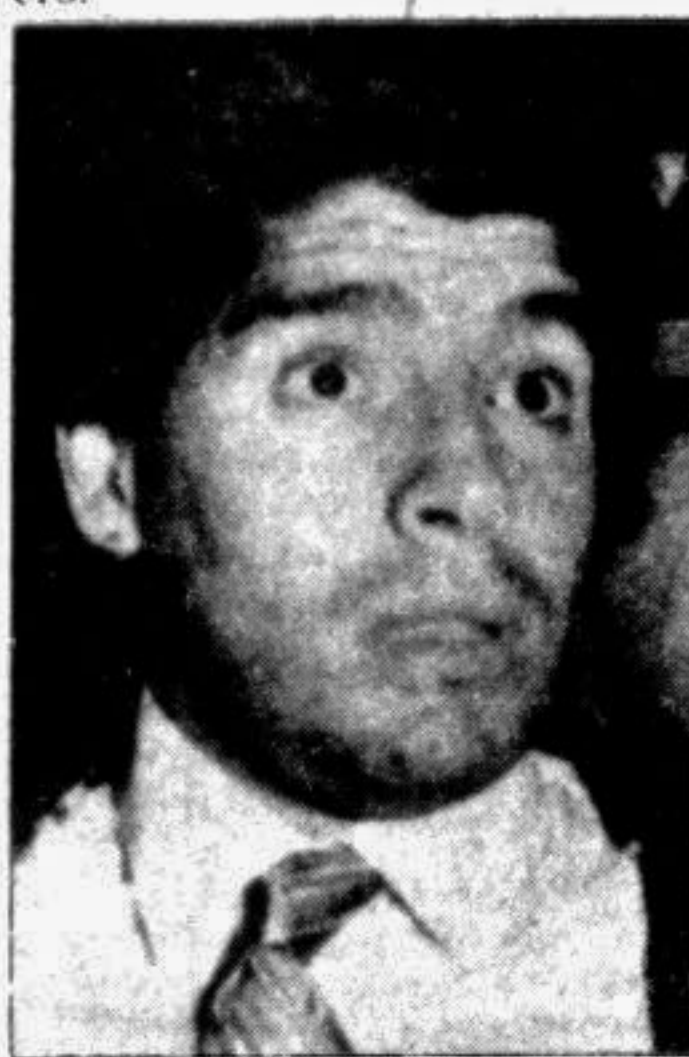
But the man who last year took pot shots at journalists with an air rifle and is currently serving a 15-month playing ban for drugs abuse, was described by the players as a compassionate boss, a good tactician and an excellent motivator.

"It's a great shame he's gone, he's the best coach I've had in my career," said midfielder Fernando Quiróz in a telephone interview from his Buenos Aires home.

"It was a good experience, simply because of who he is. But the relationship with the players was perfect," said the 26-year-old, who has worked with six coaches in his career to date.

He always looks for the positive things in a player, if

you do something wrong, he will tell you but he does it in the right way, without showing you up in front of your teammates. He did not have any problems with any of the players.



DIEGO MARADONA
Quiróz also praised Maradona's tactical awareness. Defender Gustavo Costas said Maradona knew how to bring out the best in his players.

"He's an excellent motivator. He has confidence in his players and shows it," said Costas, one of the team's most experienced members.

The club, which has suffered for 28 years without a

major title since winning the South American Libertadores Cup in 1967, lived turbulent days during Maradona's reign.

His presence attracted a media hordes, especially when he went missing for one week in March. The players said, however, they were unaffected by the traumas of working with one of the most controversial soccer players in history.

"Diego sheltered the team from the attention. He never took out his frustrations on the players," said Quiróz.

Maradona, who was joint coach of the team along with Carlos Fren, did not leave the club with the most impressive of records.

Racing are a modest ninth in the 20-team Argentine Championship with three wins in 12 games. One of them came when Maradona was on leave and one of them was on Tuesday, three days after his departure.

But the club's record last year had been even more dismal and Costas is convinced Maradona was on the right track.

"We were unlucky in a lot of games. We could easily have won three or four more points than we got."

"Forming a good football team needs time. We were getting better and we were very enthusiastic about him making a comeback as a player," Costas said.

Butragueno to bid Madrid 'bye'

MADRID, May 13: Spanish international Emilio Butragueno will leave Real Madrid at the end of the season after more than a decade at the club, reports Reuters.

The 31-year-old forward, capped 69 times, has played only a handful of first team games this season after featuring in the Madrid line-up for most of the 1980s.

One of the most popular players in the squad, Butragueno — known as "El Buitre" (The Vulture) for his ability to pounce on loose balls in the penalty area — is widely tipped to end his career in Japan.

"We're conscious of just what Butragueno means to the Madrid fans. We don't yet know where he's going but we will pay him the homage he deserves," said club board member Nemesio Fernandez Cuesta.

Butragueno, born and bred in the Spanish capital, joined the current league leaders in 1983. He has said he has no desire to play for any other club in Spain.

FIFA's five

ZURICH, May 13: Soccer's world governing body FIFA, on Friday named five people it has declared "persona non grata in football" for their alleged role in a match-rigging scam during the recent World Youth Championships, reports Reuters.

A FIFA newsletter said players from various teams were approached during last month's championships in Qatar and asked to "manipulate the outcome of certain matches in return for cash" for a southeast Asian betting syndicate.

The players and teams involved reported the matter to FIFA, which carried out an investigation.

A FIFA spokesman said the five — all Asian — were deported from Qatar during the championships. He did not know whether they faced any charges on their return home.

Penalty spot phobia!

ZURICH, May 13: World soccer body FIFA complained on Friday that referees were being too cautious and inconsistent in awarding penalties, especially during high-pressure games, reports Reuters.

In an editorial in FIFA's monthly newsletter, general secretary Sepp Blatter recalled an Austrian novel called "The goalkeeper's fear of the penalty kick."

"The title might have been just as valid for the referee as the goalkeeper," wrote Blatter. "For there are still too many instances when the referee appears afraid to indicate the spot."

Blatter said that referees might be happy to award penalties for fouls within the penalty area in a mid-season match between two middle-of-the-table teams.

But in an end-of-season match with a title at stake, the same foul could make referees think twice, said Blatter.

"In FIFA's ongoing campaign for consistent refereeing, the concept of consistency must apply not only to all parts of the world but also to all parts of the field of play, not only to all times within a single match but also to all times of year," wrote Blatter.

"The penalty area is as much a part of the field of play as the centre circle and an offence committed in midfield which entails a largely inconsequential direct free kick should be punished no differently in the penalty area."

"And the same offence at the start of the season must be dealt with in the same manner towards the end."

Blatter said that with three World Championships on the calendar this year and with many league seasons now reaching their climax, referees had to overcome their reluctance to award penalties, regardless of the pressure from the media.

Zaragoza stun Gunners

PARIS, May 13: Real Zaragoza beat Arsenal 2-1 (halftime 0-0, 90 minutes 1-1) after extra-time in the European Cup Winners' Cup final on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Scorers: Real Zaragoza — Juan Ena (68th), Nayim (120th); Arsenal — John Hartson (75th). Attendance: 42,424.

Regatta in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, May 13: Pakistan plans to hold its first major international yachting competition at the Karachi harbour in September. It was announced Saturday, reports AFP.



Deng Yaping of China in action against compatriot Liu Wei during their women's singles semifinal match at World Table Tennis Championships in Tianjin, China yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

Kim earns ITTF's wrath

TIANJIN, China, May 13: South Korea's Kim Taek-Soo, the first player to be kicked out of a Table Tennis World Championships for using a banned glue to improve his game, lost an appeal against a quarter-final disqualification on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Kim, the world number five, had beaten China's top player Wang Tao in their last-eight match in straight games on Friday, a result in stark contrast to the home player's easy defeat of the South Korean in the team event semifinals last Sunday.

"We accept that he made a genuine mistake but the appeal had to be refused because we have to follow the regulations," Andre Damman, a member of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) jury considering the appeal, told reporters.

"Kim used the wrong can (of glue)," Damman said after a second and final appeal against the disqualification. "There was no question of any tampering with the testing. The solvent he used had far too high levels of toxicity," Damman added.

Details emerged later that Kim's bats had been tested three times previously during the team events and that one bat had been confiscated as a proscribed solvent was detected.

"Four rackets were confiscated during the team events one of which belonged to Kim Taek-Soo," said Colin Clements, chairman of the ITTF rules committee. "His rackets were tested three times — once there was zero (toxicity), the second time it was borderline and the third was over the limit."

"The tests were carried out before play in the team event with the only penalty being confiscation of the racket. Because of time restraints testing was done after matches in the singles with disqualification as the penalty that's completely fair as all the players were treated the same way."

The ITTF had banned Kim after a routine test on his bat after Friday's match found that it contained a banned solvent "at a level several times above the permitted limit."

Officials later confirmed that he was the first player to be thrown out of a World Championships for this offence.

Glues are applied by players immediately before matches to speed up serves and improve spin.

The disqualification means that Kim's beaten opponent, world number two Wang Tao, will go through to Sunday's semifinals and Chinese players will now make up the last four in the men's singles, emulating the women's event and ensuring a host country victory in both competitions.

"Our rules are not clear on this (Wang's semifinal berth) but we decided that Kim probably took advantage of an illegal product so we had to let Wang go through," Damman said.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Wang, whose form has been inconsistent, was easily beaten in straight games 21-18, 21-16, 21-18 by Kim in the quarter-final.

Deng wins Sino duel

TIANJIN, China, May 13: China's Deng Yaping did her duty when she won the women's single title at the World Table Tennis Championships here on Saturday by beating teammate Qiao Hong, reports AFP.

But the 22-year-old, who has been ranked world number one for five years, showed little of the brilliance that has made her the most feared woman in table tennis.

Instead the 10,000 strong crowd packed into the Tianjin gymnasium were treated to a final that looked more like a choreographed exhibition than a struggle between the two best players in the world.

Even the score had a certain artistic balance to it: 14-21, 21-17, 21-17, 14-21, 21-14.

In the final game Deng held an unbeatable 20-8 lead but suddenly the 26-year-old Qiao, who has for so long lived in the shadow of Deng, began hitting a series of winners to reach 14.

Deng then firmly closed the door in a furious exchange of smashes with a perfectly placed forehand and the crowd, which had been strangely muted throughout, did their duty and applauded.

The only emotion Deng showed throughout the evening was when the Chinese flag was raised in the victory ceremony and she shed a tear.

Holyfield and co speak out

NEW YORK, May 13: Former champions Evander Holyfield, Michael Moorer and Lennox Lewis all took pot shots at the World Boxing Council's (WBC) recent decision to rank Mike Tyson as its number one contender despite his inactivity for nearly four years, reports Reuters.

"It's not right," said Holyfield on Wednesday in a telephone conference call with Moorer and Lewis.

"You look at the situation and it's the kind of political type of thing that is not fair for the other guys. You should have to fight someone in the top 10 to get ranked."

"It's sad," said Holyfield, who fights Ray Mercer in Atlantic City on May 20 in his first bout since losing the title to Moorer a year ago.

Like Holyfield, Lewis and Moorer are working their way back for another crack at the title and resent the easy ride being given to the 29-year-old Tyson, who has not fought since outpointing Razor Ruddock in June 1991.

"It shows how much politicking and racketeering plays in boxing," Lewis said.

Tyson's re-entry to the top of the ratings card came shortly after his release from an Indiana prison where he served three years on a rape conviction.

Lewis fights Lionel Butler Saturday in Sacramento, California, in the Briton's first bout since losing the WBC crown to Oliver McCall last September.

Also featured on the Sacramento card is a 12-round pitting Moorer against Melvin Foster.

"Everyone talks about Mike Tyson fighting and doing this and that," said Moorer, who will be boxing for the first time since he was knocked out by George Foreman to lose the International Boxing Federation crown last November.

"Mike Tyson was a force to reckon with four years ago, but this is now. It's unfair to neglect everybody else and put Tyson back on the threshold of the championship," he said.

Gazza giving nothing away

LONDON, May 13: Paul Gascoigne indicated Saturday he probably would be leaving Lazio at the end of the season, but gave few hints as to where he would be headed, reports AP.

The 27-year-old England midfielder has been the subject of an unofficial bidding war for several weeks as British teams anticipate his return after an unproductive and injury-plagued two years in Italy.

"The main thing for me now is to get my future sorted out," the midfielder told Channel 4's *Gazzetta Football Italia*. "Lazio have agreed to let me talk to clubs and listen to offers."

Scottish champion Rangers appear to lead the Gascoigne sweepstakes, having agreed a 4.5 million-pound (7.2 billion dollars) transfer fee with Lazio last weekend. This week, Aston Villa added their name to the list of interest clubs, which is reported to include Newcastle, Everton, Leeds, Queens Park Rangers and Middlesbrough.

Gascoigne indicated he would be content playing with Rangers, who recently clinched their seventh con-

secutive Scottish Premier Division title and will return to the European Champions' Cup again next season.

"I heard Rangers were interested," Gascoigne said. "I

heard Terry had anything to say he would say it my face," Gascoigne said. "I've spoken to Terry and that is definitely what he didn't say. He just wants me to be happy because when I'm happy I play good football."

Gascoigne was sold from Tottenham to Lazio for 5.5 million pounds (8.8 million dollars) three years ago, but a series of injuries have kept him more on the sidelines than on the field. Having returned recently after a year-long absence with a broken leg, Gascoigne found that Lazio's structured offense had little room for his creative midfield style.

Gascoigne was sold from Tottenham to Lazio for 5.5 million pounds (8.8 million dollars) three years ago, but a series of injuries have kept him more on the sidelines than on the field. Having returned recently after a year-long absence with a broken leg, Gascoigne found that Lazio's structured offense had little room for his creative midfield style.

Gascoigne was sold from Tottenham to Lazio for 5.5 million pounds (8.8 million dollars) three years ago, but a series of injuries have kept him more on the sidelines than on the field. Having returned recently after a year-long absence with a broken leg, Gascoigne found that Lazio's structured offense had little room for his creative midfield style.

Gascoigne was sold from Tottenham to Lazio for 5.5 million pounds (8.8 million dollars) three years ago, but a series of injuries have kept him more on the sidelines than on the field. Having returned recently after a year-long absence with a broken leg, Gascoigne found that Lazio's structured offense had little room for his creative midfield style.

Gascoigne was sold from Tottenham to Lazio for 5.5 million pounds (8.8 million dollars) three years ago, but a series of injuries have kept him more on the sidelines than on the field. Having returned recently after a year-long absence with a broken leg, Gascoigne found that Lazio's structured offense had little room for his creative midfield style.

Martinez gets into groove

ROME, May 13: After months in the doldrums following her surprise Wimbledon victory, Conchita Martinez is peaking in time for another Grand Slam tournament.

The Spaniard powered her way into the semifinals of the Italian Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-3 win Friday over No 6 seed Mary Jo Fernandez, reports AP.

Martinez, seeded third, has won her last three tournaments and lost only one match since March. She also has won the last two editions of this clay court classic, a major tuneup for the French Open later this month.

Against Fernandez, a top-rated US clay court player, Martinez was impressive. She had some trouble with her serve, playing in the wind and what at the time was an intermittent drizzle, but she won all the big points and had complete command of the match.

She attributes her recent success to a new coach, Carlos Kirmayr, a Brazilian who previously worked with Sanchez Vicario and Gabriela Sabatini.

"I'm getting more aggressive, going more to the net and finishing points earlier," Martinez said.

She rejected any suggestion that she's lazy, unwilling to push herself to achieve a higher ranking.

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

Covacs dead

BUCHAREST, May 13: Romania's Stefan Covacs, who twice coached Ajax Amsterdam to the European Champions' Cup title in the early 70s, has died aged 74, reports AFP.

Romania daily newspaper Sportul Romanesc told AFP on Friday the former French coach died in his birth place at Cluj in western Transylvania where he had retired.

Covacs had been taken to hospital on several occasions following a heart attack.

She confounded critics who had said she could never win on the grass at Wimbledon. That victory, Martinez asserted, "gives you a lot of confidence to know you can win a lot of titles."

The other quarterfinal matchups pit No 2 Mary Pierce, who holds dual US-French citizenship, against No 8 Iva Majoli of Croatia and No 13 Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic against the unseeded Joannette Kruger of South Africa.

The two million dollars men's edition of the Italian Open, which starts play Monday, suffered a blow when organizers announced the

withdrawal of Boris Becker, the No 3 ranked player in the world. Becker was said to be suffering severe pain in his lower back.

The pullout puts off any possible confrontation with Thomas Muster, who recently came back from two sets down to defeat Becker in the finals of Monte Carlo. The German then questioned the speed of Muster's recovery from exhaustion in the semifinals.

Also doubtful is the big-serving Dutchman Richard Krajicek, who injured his knee in Hamburg, Germany, this week.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.

Pete Sampras, seeking to defend his Italian title, will lead the field.



Martinez is peaking in time for another Grand Slam tournament.

The Spaniard powered her way into the semifinals of the Italian Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-3 win Friday over No 6 seed Mary Jo Fernandez, reports AP.

Martinez, seeded third, has won her last three tournaments and lost only one match since March. She also has won the last two editions of this clay court classic, a major tuneup for the French Open later this month.

Against Fernandez, a top-rated US clay court player, Martinez was impressive. She had some trouble with her serve, playing in the wind and what at the time was an intermittent drizzle, but she won all the big points and had complete command of the match.

She attributes her recent success to a new coach, Carlos Kirmayr, a Brazilian who previously worked with Sanchez Vicario and Gabriela Sabatini.

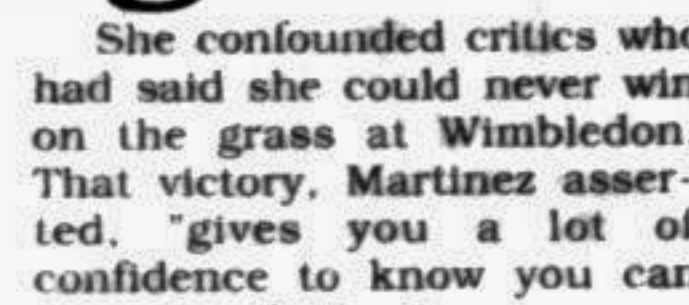
"I'm getting more aggressive, going more to the net and finishing points earlier," Martinez said.

She rejected any suggestion that she's lazy, unwilling to push herself to achieve a higher ranking.

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."



Martinez is peaking in time for another Grand Slam tournament.

The Spaniard powered her way into the semifinals of the Italian Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-3 win Friday over No 6 seed Mary Jo Fernandez, reports AP.

Martinez, seeded third, has won her last three tournaments and lost only one match since March. She also has won the last two editions of this clay court classic, a major tuneup for the French Open later this month.

Against Fernandez, a top-rated US clay court player, Martinez was impressive. She had some trouble with her serve, playing in the wind and what at the time was an intermittent drizzle, but she won all the big points and had complete command of the match.

She attributes her recent success to a new coach, Carlos Kirmayr, a Brazilian who previously worked with Sanchez Vicario and Gabriela Sabatini.

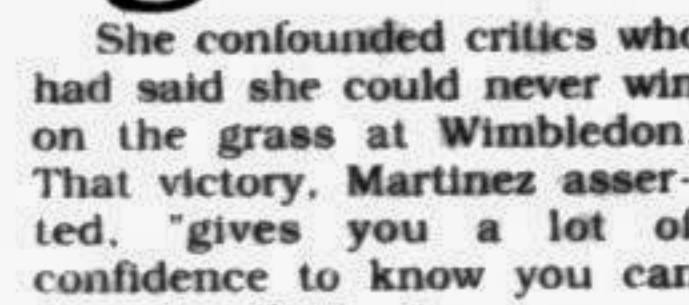
"I'm getting more aggressive, going more to the net and finishing points earlier," Martinez said.

She rejected any suggestion that she's lazy, unwilling to push herself to achieve a higher ranking.

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."



Martinez is peaking in time for another Grand Slam tournament.

The Spaniard powered her way into the semifinals of the Italian Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-3 win Friday over No 6 seed Mary Jo Fernandez, reports AP.

Martinez, seeded third, has won her last three tournaments and lost only one match since March. She also has won the last two editions of this clay court classic, a major tuneup for the French Open later this month.

Against Fernandez, a top-rated US clay court player, Martinez was impressive. She had some trouble with her serve, playing in the wind and what at the time was an intermittent drizzle, but she won all the big points and had complete command of the match.

She attributes her recent success to a new coach, Carlos Kirmayr, a Brazilian who previously worked with Sanchez Vicario and Gabriela Sabatini.

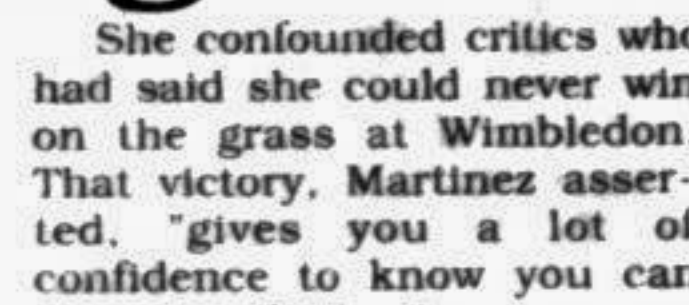
"I'm getting more aggressive, going more to the net and finishing points earlier," Martinez said.

She rejected any suggestion that she's lazy, unwilling to push herself to achieve a higher ranking.

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."



Martinez is peaking in time for another Grand Slam tournament.

The Spaniard powered her way into the semifinals of the Italian Open with a convincing 6-4, 6-3 win Friday over No 6 seed Mary Jo Fernandez, reports AP.

Martinez, seeded third, has won her last three tournaments and lost only one match since March. She also has won the last two editions of this clay court classic, a major tuneup for the French Open later this month.

Against Fernandez, a top-rated US clay court player, Martinez was impressive. She had some trouble with her serve, playing in the wind and what at the time was an intermittent drizzle, but she won all the big points and had complete command of the match.

She attributes her recent success to a new coach, Carlos Kirmayr, a Brazilian who previously worked with Sanchez Vicario and Gabriela Sabatini.

"I'm getting more aggressive, going more to the net and finishing points earlier," Martinez said.

She rejected any suggestion that she's lazy, unwilling to push herself to achieve a higher ranking.

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."

"I'm telling you it's not true," Martinez responded. "If I didn't work I wouldn't be No 4 in the world, I'd be 800-something."