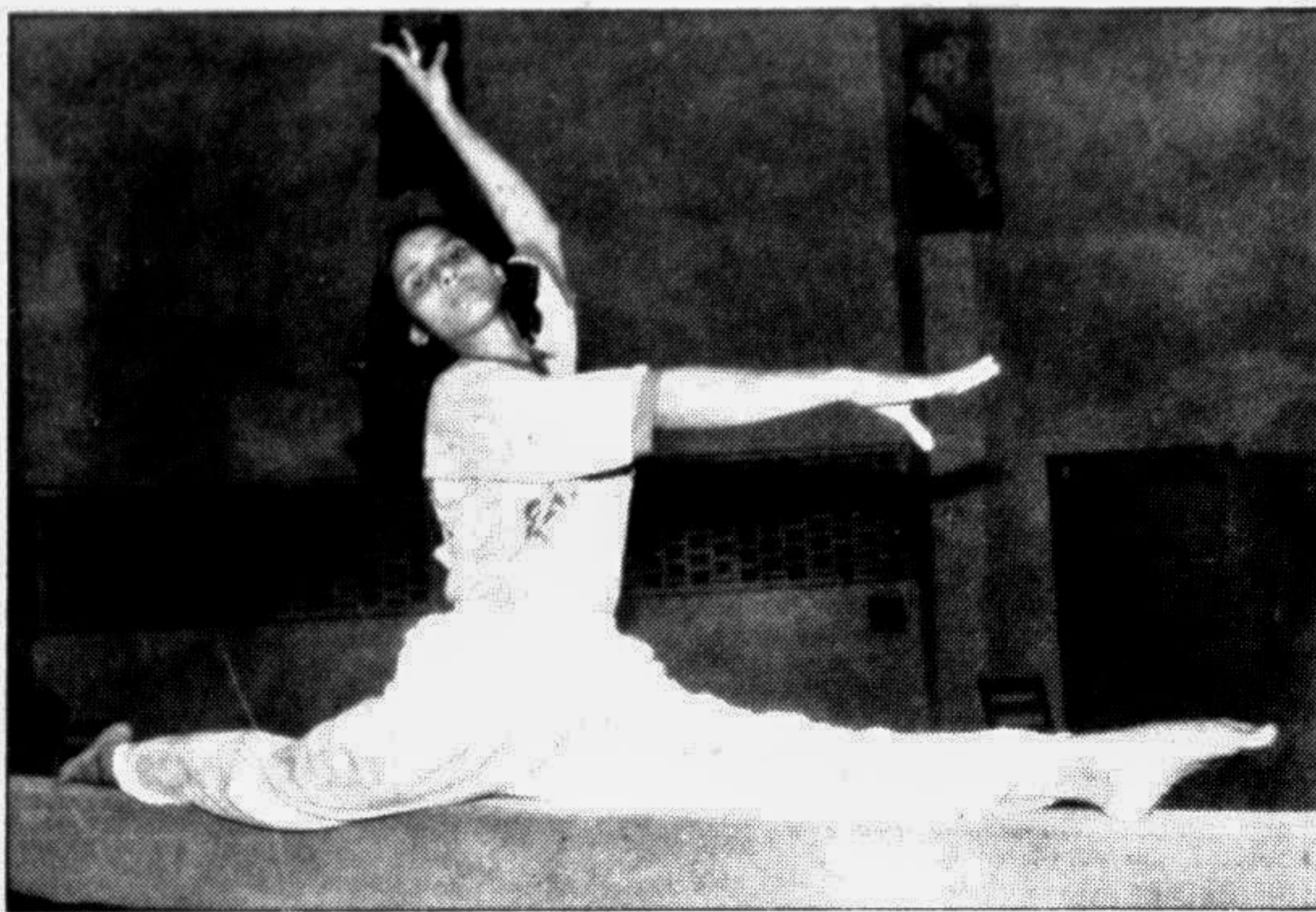


Ansars gymnasts gain top spot

Sports Reporter
Bangladesh Ansars clinched the top slot bagging seven gold in the two-day Afsar Group 21st National Gymnastic championships which concluded at the NSC gymnasium yesterday.
The power-packed Ansars ended the last day of the meet with a five gold, haul to take their tally to seven gold, five silver and five bronze.
Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC) finished a distant second securing three gold, four silver and bronze while Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Pratishthan (BKSP) secured third with one silver and two bronze.
In the men's group, A K M Saiful Islam of Bangladesh Ansars emerged individual champion scoring 97.3 points while his teammate Dulal Gomes finished runner-up collecting 91.55 points.
In the women's group, Morzina Hossain of BTMC became the individual champion scoring 53.50 points while her teammate Sharmin Sultana Sumi finished runner-up with 51.40 points.
Some 75 gymnasts took part in the 10 event national meet.
State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadeque Hossain attended the concluding function and distributed the prizes.



Morzina Hossain Shima of Bangladesh Ansars shows her poise on the balance beam in the Afsar Group 21st national gymnastic championships at the NSC gymnasium yesterday. Shima became the individual champion scoring 53.50 points. — Star photo

Gullit goes to Chelsea

LONDON, May 31: Dutch star Ruud Gullit has signed with English Premier League side Chelsea on a free transfer, a spokesman for the club said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.
Chief executive Colin Hutchinson said the deal was expected to be worth 1.5 million pounds sterling (2.41 million dollars) over two years.
Gullit, 32, will end eight years in Italy when he plays his last match for Sampdoria on Sunday.
Chelsea manager Glenn Hoddle, who went to Rome two weeks ago in an attempt to lure Paul Gascoigne to Stamford Bridge, is reported to have met Gullit at the same time.
Hoddle is seeking to lift his side after a season struggling for Premier League survival.
England captain David Platt, a teammate of Gullit's at Sampdoria, said: "I know Ruud was impressed when he met Glenn Hoddle. He played against him in the past and likes his ideas about the game."

'98 WC soccer schedule to be extended

ZURICH, Switzerland, May 31: The 1998 World Cup will be extended two days to a total of 33, and the final will take place July 12 in the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, FIFA officials said Tuesday, reports AP.
The decision made by the World Cup organizing committee, must be ratified Wednesday by FIFA's executive committee.
The tournament, to be played in nine French cities, will start June 10 at Saint-Denis. In addition to Saint-Denis and Parc des Princes in Paris, games will be played at Bordeaux, Lens, Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes, Saint-Etienne and Toulouse.
This will be the first World Cup with 32 teams. The last two World Cups, involving 24 teams, were played over 31 days.

Gaudino charged

MANNHEIM, Germany, May 31: Bundesliga soccer star Maurizio Gaudino was charged Tuesday with auto insurance fraud for his alleged involvement in a ring that sold cars and declared them stolen, reports AP.
The 28-year-old former German national, now on loan to Manchester City from Eintracht Frankfurt, was charged in three cases.
Chief prosecutor Peter Wechsung said a Mannheim court must now decide whether Gaudino, who was first arrested December 15, must stand trial.
Between January 1992 and March 1993, Gaudino allegedly helped friends defraud or attempt to defraud insurers. A BMW and a Porsche were sold and declared stolen and a VW Golf was set ablaze.
In the first two cases, 195,000 marks (dfls 140,000) was collected and Gaudino was paid for his assistance, Wechsung said. In the third, the insurance company suspected fraud and did not pay.
Gaudino denies taking money and has vowed to end his association with the people in the alleged ring. In all, charges were filed against 23 people in the case, eight of whom were jailed.
Gaudino is to make his comeback on German soil on Wednesday after a half-year absence, playing on a team challenging the German national squad.

Graf, Sabatini struggle

PARIS, May 31: Steffi Graf and Gabriela Sabatini, once the leading figures of women's tennis, both experienced problems before making it to the third round of the French Open on Wednesday, reports Reuter.
The German world number two was not the Graf express of old as she took well over an hour and lost seven games along the way before beating compatriot Petra Begerow 6-4, 6-3.
Sabatini, who slumped to eighth in the world after a streak of poor results, lost one game more than her former doubles partner in a 7-5, 6-3 victory over South African Amanda Coetzer.
The two hard-fought matches seemed to confirm the fight for the women's title may be much more open than in previous years, when favourites would crush opponents in one-sided early rounds.
"Concentration is the main problem. I was trying too hard and I was not patient enough. Maybe I think it look easy at times and I lose my concentration," said Graf, who is playing in her 13th French Open, a tournament she won three times.
"I did not really play well today. I made too many mistakes and I can't be happy with this match," she confessed.
Sabatini, who has never gone further than the semifinals in Paris, also admitted she had some ups and downs mentally.
"I lost my concentration along the way," the Argentine said.
"It was pretty tough for a second round. On the other hand, it's good to have a tough match at the beginning to settle into the pace."
Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez, who had not lost a game in the first round, had an other easy round against Dutch player Miriam Oremans, winning 6-2, 6-3.
The Spaniard stretched her unbeaten run on clay this season to 21 matches.
If Graf and Sabatini may start to feel the burden of years over their shoulders, they may be soon replaced at the top of the world rankings by teenager Martina Hingis.
The Swiss prodigy showed a rare mental strength as she saved three match points in a tens three-setter before beating experienced Austrian Judith Wiesner 2-6, 6-3, 7-5.
Hingis, who become the youngest player to ever win a match at the Australian Open earlier this year before losing in the second round, could go even further here.



Mid-pitch action from yesterday's Transcom national championship match between Mojuddin High School and Narayanganj High School at the Hockey Stadium yesterday. The match ended goalless. — Star photo

Clay only calms Becker

PARIS, May 31: If Boris Becker's bid to win his first-ever clay court title fails at the French Open, it won't be for lack of trying, reports AP.
The three-times Wimbledon champion, who came safely through his first round clash against Argentina's Javier Frana in straight-sets late Tuesday, admitted: "I learned to play tennis on clay but although I have won everything else in the world I have still to win a tournament on the stuff."
Becker, 27, looked as though he might chalk up his first success on the deadly slow surface at Monte Carlo last month — but, although he held two match points in the final, he was beaten by Austria's baseline powerhouse Thomas Muster.
The defeat upset him so much he crashed at the first hurdle at his next two tournaments — at Munich and Hamburg.
"I'm still trying to recover from that. He grimaced. 'It was a big pain to me. To win a title on clay is something I have been trying to do for eleven years and I was very close that day in Monte Carlo.'"
Since his recent defeats, Becker, who is playing in his ninth French Open, has spared no effort to rethink his strategy and acclimatise for Paris.
"I arrived here a full week earlier just to prepare on all the courts," said the German who is seeded to play 1989 Roland Garros champion Michael Chang in the quarter-finals.
"For example I had never played on court number eight until this year."
"Now I have practised hard. I haven't played a tournament in nearly three weeks and I am feeling pretty good about everything."
Becker, whose career was in sharp decline when he joined forces with Florida coach Nick Bollettieri 15 months ago, has climbed back to number three in the world. But he admits that life is tough at the top.
"I think I have got better — but the competition is so great these days. Every six months the game is changing. It is getting more powerful and the players are getting stronger and quicker. You have to adapt and keep adapting."

Euro b'ball in stalemate

SOFIA, May 31: Bosnia might refuse to play the Serbian Yugoslav team in a European Basketball Championship qualifying match this week, the Bosnian coach said Tuesday, reports AP.
"We are waiting for instructions from our government" on whether the game will be played Thursday in Sofia, Bulgaria, said coach Sabit Hadzic.
A Belgrade newspaper, however, said Bosnia already have decided to boycott the match because of the death of their Foreign Minister, who was killed Sunday in a missile attack on his helicopter by Croatian Serbs.
The daily newspaper Nasa Borba quoted an unidentified Bosnian team official as saying, "We can't permission from our presidency in Sarajevo to go to Sofia, but not to play Yugoslavia."
"It was thought that our match with Yugoslavia would be badly taken in Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially in Sarajevo," he told the newspaper.
Five teams are to play in the five-day round-robin qualifications for the June 21-July 2 European Basketball Championships, which are to be held in Athens, Greece.
Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey, Estonia and Bulgaria are competing for two berths at Athens.
Alexander Bozhkov, senior executive at the Bulgarian Basketball Federation, said international basketball authorities could penalize Bosnia if they refuse to play Yugoslavia.
Bozhkov said Bosnia knew in advance they would play Yugoslavia and did not complain.
A negative decision by Bosnia could dash their chances for the championships because they would not win any points for their first match.
Croatia, another former Yugoslav republic, already have qualified for the finals.
This is a special tournament, organised to give Yugoslavia, European basketball champion in 1991, a chance to play in this year's final round.
The Serb-led Yugoslav team was banned from last year's qualifications because of UN sanctions, which were eased this year and lifted in sports contacts.
There was no sign of ill-will Tuesday between Serbs and Bosnians at the Park Hotel in Sofia, where the two teams were staying.
Players sat around and chatted, waiting for the decision from Sarajevo.
A few years ago, before the Balkans crisis, many members of both squads played together on Yugoslavia's national team and have remained friends.

Transcom schools hockey

Rajshahi romp
Rajshahi Medical College Campus High School recorded an impressive 5-0 goals victory over last year's semifinalist Armanito Govt High School in the Transcom national schools championship at the Hockey Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.
All the five goals were scored in the first half.
Raju opened the Rajshahi account by a field goal in the very 5th minute. Raquibul Hassan doubled the margin in the 20th minute also with a field goal and Shamim Reza netted the third goal in the 31st minute from penalty stroke.
Bachchu Miah added two more field goals in quick succession in the 33rd and 34th minute to register a comfortable win for the side.
The day's second match between Chittagong Government Muslim High School and Dhaka Residential Model High School ended in one-all draw at the same venue in the afternoon.
Rajib Mahmood put the Dhaka outfit ahead in the 14th minute while Riazuddin Riaz levelled the parity in the 36th minute.
The day's third match also in the afternoon at the same venue between holders Narayanganj High School and Faridpur Maizuddin High School ended in a goalless draw.

UEFA draws on June 12

GENEVA, May 31: The draws for the preliminary rounds of the European Football Union's (UEFA) three main club competitions, the European Cup, Cup winners' Cup and UEFA Cup, will be made in Geneva on July 12, a UEFA official said today, reports Reuter.
First leg matches will be from August 8 to 10 with the return legs from August 22 to 24.
The draws for the first round of all three competitions will be made in Geneva on August 25, the official said.

Kohler to quit Juventus

BONN, May 31: German international Juergen Kohler is to quit Italian giant Juventus to join Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund next season, the Ruhr Nachrichten Newspaper reported here on Tuesday, reports AFP.
No contract has yet been signed, but the 29-year-old defender — part of the 1990 World Cup winning side — has bought a house near Dortmund in preparation for the move, the newspaper said.
Borussia Dortmund, currently second in the league, add Kohler to a string of German internationals signed last season from Italian clubs, including Stefan Reuter (Juventus), Matthias Sammer (Inter Milan), Karlheinz Riedle (Lazio) and Andreas Moeller (Juventus).
Brazilian Julio Cesar, meanwhile, has extended his contract with Dortmund until 1997.

Samaranch supports Sydney Games

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, May 31: International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch confirmed his "total support" for Sydney to host the 2000 Games here on Tuesday, despite concerns over finances, reports AP.
John Coates, president of the Australian Olympic Committee, was quoted in newspaper reports on Sunday saying a row over finances had led many international officials to question whether Sydney wanted to host the Games.
But he appeared to step back from those warnings later Sunday, telling a radio station the IOC had not previously removed a city's right to host the Games.
The Sun Herald newspaper had reported that Samaranch was concerned the New South Wales state government was not fully behind the hosting of the Olympics.
The recently-elected labour state government's Olympics Minister Michael Knight had earlier warned taxpayers might have to pay an extra 600 million Australian dollars (440 million US dollars) due to a shortfall in private funding.
But Samaranch said here on Tuesday the Sydney Organising Committee (SOCOG) had his total support.
The IOC said it had received firm assurances that the Australian Federal Government and the state government of New South Wales were behind the SOCOG.
"The IOC had asked the SOCOG to present a report on the situation in Australia and its repercussions for the next executive committee meeting of the IOC in Budapest from June 12," said an IOC statement.



The Bangladesh Ansars' gymnasts who clinched the top slot in the Afsar Group 21st national gymnast championships at NSC gymnasium yesterday. — Star photo

Sampras sent tumbling

PARIS, May 31: Pete Sampras, considered a longshot despite his No 2 seeding, tumbled out of the French Open in the first round Wednesday with a dramatic five-set loss to Austrian Gilbert Schaller, reports agencies.
Schaller, in the most impressive victory of his life, roared back after losing sets two and three to triumph 7-6 (7-3), 4-6, 6-7 (7-4), 6-2, 6-4.
The match has been suspended by darkness Tuesday with Sampras leading 3-1 in the third set.
Schaller, 26, has won only one tournament in his career, in Morocco this year, and had won only one match in seven previous Grand Slams. But he returned Sampras' powerful serves with aplomb — despite the American's 24 aces — and scored well with his rocket-like backhand.
Sampras, who committed 99 unforced errors to 41 for Schaller, continued a streak of misery on clay this year. This was the fourth time in five clay outings that he failed to survive his opening match.
A host of seeded women advanced Wednesday, although No 2 seed Steffi Graf was displaced as she won her 20th straight match, beating German compatriot Petra Begerow 6-4, 6-3 in the second round.
Also advancing to the third round were No 4 seed Conchita Martinez, 6-2, 6-3 over Miriam Oremans of the Netherlands, and No 8 Gabriela Sabatini, 7-5, 6-3 over Amanda Coetzer of South Africa. It was the 23rd straight victory for Martinez.
Three other seeded women, No 5 Jana Novotna, No 7 Lindsay Davenport and No 9 Kimiko Date, won their first-round matches.
The tournament's youngest player, 14-year-old Martina Hingis of Switzerland, had a spectacular French Open debut, saving three match points against experienced Austrian Judith Wiesner to salvage a 2-6, 6-3, 7-5 victory. Hingis has soared to 23rd in the world — triumphed 6-1, 1-6, 6-2, 6-4 over Jordi Arrese of Spain.
Two of the men's favourites were to see action later Wednesday — top-seeded Andre Agassi against Australian Todd Woodbridge, and Thomas Muster, unbeaten on clay this year, against Cedric Pioline of France.
Fourth-seeded Goran Ivanisevic became the first major upset victim of the French Open losing in straight sets Tuesday to qualifier Mikael Tillstrom of Sweden in the first round.
Sergi Bruguera, by contrast, started strongly in his quest for a third straight championship, downing Patrick Rafter of Australia, 6-3, 6-1, 7-6 (7-3).
While Ivanisevic crumbled, sixth-seeded Michael Chang, the 1989 champion, advanced easily, beating Italy's Diego Nargis 6-3, 6-4, 6-1. Marc Rosset, seeded 16th, won 7-5, 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (7-5) over Richard Fromberg of Australia.
Stefan Edberg, unseeded here for the first time since early in his career, romped over France's Fabrice Santoro, 6-2, 6-0, 6-2.



PETE SAMPRAS rankings, just behind the 22nd-ranked Wiesner.
Graf, a three-time champion seeking to regain the title she last won in 1993, was downbeat after her victory over Begerow, the world's 71st-ranked player.
Novotna, who lost her only previous match on clay this year, triumphed 6-1, 2-6, 6-1 over Austrian Sandra Dopfer.
Davenport, winner of last week's Strasbourg Open, was a 7-6 (7-4), 6-0 victor over Min Tang of Hong Kong. Date beat Ludmila Richterova of the Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-2.
In an early men's match, 10th seeded Magnus Larsson — a surprise semifinalist last year

Testing time for Pierce

PARIS, May 31: French by design but made in Canada, Mary Pierce returned to her adopted home and gave the Parisian crowd what it came to see — a comfortable win in her first match at the French Open on Tuesday, reports Reuter.
Pierce arrived at Roland Garros a year ago with a reputation of being all style and not much substance.
But after a surprising march through to the final and after winning the Australian Open earlier this year, Pierce is well aware that the fickle French fans expect for to do more than just look good on court this time around.
Pierce, who disappointed her followers last year when she lost to Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario in the final, strutted her stuff for the Centre Court crowd as she eased into the second round with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Australia's Nicole Bradtke, a semifinalist in 1988.
"I think they expect more but that's normal," said Pierce. "Last year they didn't know what to expect."
"After seeing me go to the finals and play well last year and winning in Australia I guess they expect a little more of me. They want me to play well every day and win all my matches."
Despite the pony-tailed blonde's impressive start to the tournament she was still asked why she had not done as well as last year when she strolled through to the semifinals, losing just four games along the way.
"I made more mistakes," said Pierce. "But this is a first round in a Grand Slam tournament and it is always the most difficult thing to do to get past the first round."
Getting beyond the first round of a Grand Slam, however, could be a much easier task than being accepted by the French as one of their own.
Born in Montreal, Canada, and now playing for France, Pierce has been accepted by French fans who love her success but who have yet to take her fully to their hearts.



Third-seeded French woman Mary Pierce blasts her fearsome serve against Australian Nicali Bradtke during their first round match of the French Open Championships on the Centre-Court at Roland Garros on May 30. Pierce won 6-1, 6-3. — AFP/UNB photo