

Impressive Ivanisevic



WIMBLEDON, June 26: Two-time Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic served 21 aces as he overpowered Sebastien Lareau of Canada in the opening round at Wimbledon, reports AP.

The fourth-seeded Croatian, runner-up in 1992 and 1994, needed just 85 minutes to wear down Lareau 6-2, 6-4, 6-4, in the first match on Court One.

Ivanisevic lost in last year's final to Pete Sampras, who was opening his bid for a third straight title on Centre Court against Germany's Karsten Braasch.

Fully recovered from his first-round loss at the French Open, Sampras is aiming to become the first man since Bjorn Borg — and the very first American — to win Wimbledon three years in a row.

He is seeded second behind top-ranked Andre Agassi, but virtually everyone picks Sampras as the man to beat again. The British bookies make him 10-11 odds-on favourite, with Agassi at 9-2.

"I love the grass-court surface," Sampras said. "It has been really good to me. I just tell myself this is new stuff, and there's a lot of tennis yet to be played. Thank God there is no more clay-court tennis for the rest of the year."

After going home and not touching a racket for several days, Sampras came to London and re-established his grass-court dominance by winning both the singles and doubles titles at the pre-Wimbledon Queen's Club tournament.

"I got a whole new start at the Queen's Club," said Sampras, who has won 14 straight matches — and 23 out of 24 — on grass. "I really needed it because I was a little bit down on myself about the clay-court season. I feel good. I feel ready. I am healthy. I am ready to go."

Sampras is ready to emulate Borg, who won five straight Wimbledon titles from 1976-1980. Only five other men in history have won three straight: William Renshaw, Reggie Doherty, H. Laurie Doherty, Anthony Wilding and Fred Perry.

"Winning three would be sweet," Sampras said. "But it is something I am not really thinking about. I just kind of let my racket do the talking. There is pressure, but it is not like I can't sleep at night."



IVANISEVIC

Someone who probably experienced trouble sleeping was Braasch.

A left-hander ranked 119th in the world, Braasch is best known for his goggles, herky-jerky service motion and bad luck in draws — was Agassi's first-round victim at the French Open.

"Seems like a pretty good

opening round match," Sampras said. "He is a pretty crafty player. I think he is probably more comfortable on the slower court, but I am sure he is going to be ready to play and looking forward to it."

In early results Monday, American grass-court specialist Bryan Shelton of the United States ousted 12th-seeded Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands in straight sets, 7-6 (7-2), 6-3, 6-3. It marked the second year in a row that Krajicek lost in the first round, while Shelton showed the form that took him to the Round of 16 last year.

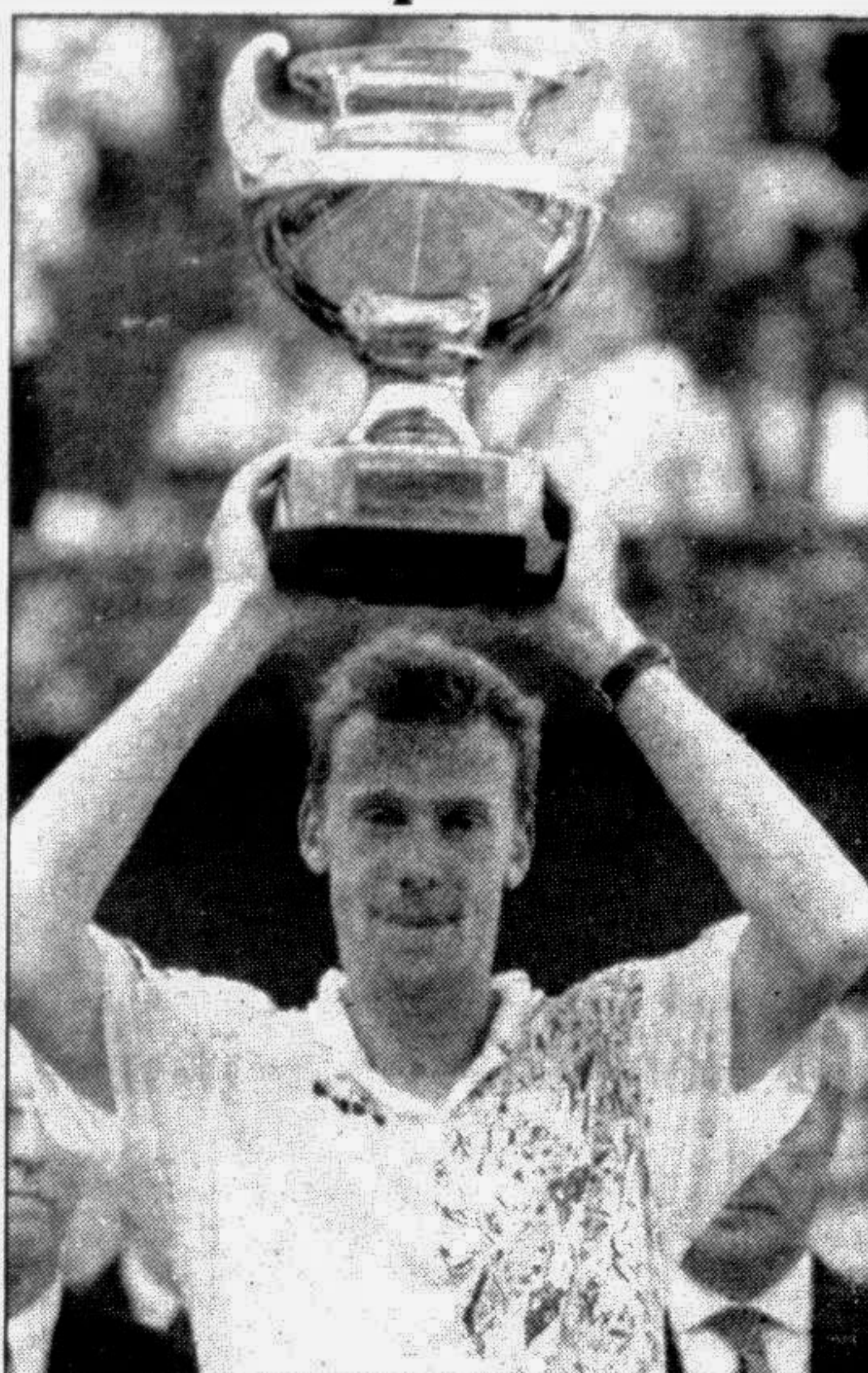
Aaron Krickstein came from two sets down to beat Sweden's Christian Bergstrom, 4-6, 0-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-2.

In women's play, 12th-seeded Amy Frazier downed Stephanie Rottier, 6-4, 7-5; and No. 15 Brenda Shultz-McCarthy was two points away from elimination before rebounding to defeat Radka Bobkova, 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (7-3), 6-1.

Later, No. 6 Kimiko Date was paired against Sabine Appelmans and No. 8 Gabriela Sabatini was up against Lea Ghirardi of France.

Sampras can be overwhelming on grass with his attacking serve-and-volley game, excellent serve return and shotmaking ability from the baseline.

He beat Jim Courier and Ivanisevic in the last two Wimbledon finals. Both were slam-bang affairs dominated by big serves, leading to widespread criticism in the British media that Sampras and grass-court tennis were boring.



Marc Rosset of Switzerland raises the champions trophy after beating defending champion Germany's Michael Stich in the final of the Halle international tournament in Germany on June 25.

Lalas to play in MLS



PISCATAWAY, New Jersey, June 26: US defender Alexi Lalas, who plays for Padova in the First Division of the Italian League, will join Major League Soccer (MLS) when it begins operations next year, the new US league announced on Sunday, reports Reuters.

"The fans here deserve professional soccer," said Lalas, who signed a multi-year pact with the league at undisclosed terms. "This is a great day for me."

Lalas, whose US team has not yet been determined, will remain with Padova for the 1995-96 season.

The red-haired, goateed fan favourite joins two other top international players who have committed to the new league — US midfielder Tab Ramos and flamboyant Mexi-

Much ado about nothing!

LONDON, June 26: Complaints over a television commercial featuring Eric Cantona were rejected on Sunday by England's Independence Television Commission (ITC), reports AFP.

Frenchman Cantona, banned from soccer till the end of September for a kung fu kick at a fan, was shown in a commercial with England striker Les Ferdinand criticising racism and violence.

Eighteen viewers complained to the ITC about the Nike advertisement saying it was an attempt to glorify and exploit Cantona's infamy and labelled it "insensitive and inappropriate."

But the ITC dismissed the complaints, saying the commercial was backing a "kick racism out of football campaign" and had received positive reactions from the soccer authorities and supporters.

The Video Standards Council is also looking at posters for a soccer video game which have also come under fire for allegedly glorifying Cantona's kung fu assault.

The Video Standards Council said it would examine the advertisements and may ask the Advertising Standards Authority to investigate.

can goalkeeper Jorge Campos. Former US World Cup players Desmond Armstrong, Peter Vermes, Mike Lapper and Mike Burns have also signed to play with the start-up league.

Another US player, John Harkes, has said that he would consider joining the MLS. Harkes currently plays for Derby in the English League.

The 10-team, two conference league is scheduled to play its first game on March 31, 1996. Teams will each play a 32-game schedule, and four teams will advance to the playoffs.

Alexi Lalas is a true all-American superstar," said league chairman Alan Rothenberg. "Major League Soccer is absolutely thrilled to have Alexi on board. His signing further proves that MLS is committed to signing the top national and international players."

Lalas, who has made 53 appearances and scored five goals for the US national team, was the first American to play in the Italian League.

"My experience in Italy has given me even greater appreciation for the beauty and passion that is soccer," said Lalas. "I know I am a better soccer player now and I am committed to bringing that experience back home to MLS."

Mozer moving to Antlers

TOKYO, June 26: Former Brazilian international Mozer will play for Kashima Antlers from the second stage in August in the Japanese League, team officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

The 34-year-old defender, whose real name is Jose Carlos Nepomuceno Mozer, represented his country 31 times, including the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

He is expected to arrive in Japan in late July with a 18-month contract from July 15, transferring from Benfica of the Portuguese First Division.

The Antlers were currently lying at second place in the J-League after their recent consecutive defeats as Brazilian internationals Leonardo and Jorginho were called away for the South American Championships.

WINDOW ON WIMBLEDON

Tawfiq Aziz Khan from Wimbledon



LONDON, June 26: Wimbledon is not just another tennis tournament in the calendar. Wimbledon is the Queen of international tennis. The sprawling complex in idyllic setting, a few hundred yards from the Thames, instils in all human minds the reverence that normally goes with holy places. Here you don't feel the massiveness of the concrete structures but your eyes can feast on a vast expanse of soothing beauty. The grounds are all laid out. The green and yellow grass courts marked with white paints have their own patterns. The surface is so hard and uniform, the grass is mowed so accurately that even the stringing perfectionist will agree that none could make a better carpet on grass. The two and a half million pound sterling extension and renovation work is also in progress and hopefully by next year it will be another magnificent sight to behold.

As you cross the Bathgate Road on way to the courts the finely trimmed green hedges soothe your eyes. And gradually you hear muffled voices, musical giggles and the thud of the tennis ball hitting the racket from across the hedges. The hedges give way to concrete walls defending the territory from the invaders. Soon you are on the lawns of Aorangi Park area through Gate 1.

Players — men and women — practise on a number of courts in Aorangi Park. Last evening there were a number

of players warming up and grabbing whatever practice they could get before the tournament which starts today. But I hardly saw any big name. I could recognise Medvedev but the rest of them looked familiar but I could not place them. They look so different from their TV appearance. Compared to last year there has been a rise in the prize money in 1995. Last year the total prize money was £5,682,170 and this year it is £6,025,550, a



JEREMY BATES

rise of about 6 per cent.

BATES BRITAIN'S TORCH-BEARER

The last World Cup soccer was played in the United States in 1994 without the England team. England is pioneer of Association Football and a World Cup without England was like playing

Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Here in Wimbledon the championships have been without proper local representation for a long time.

The men's singles event started in 1877 — the first tennis tournament in the All-England Croquet and Tennis Club. That was exactly 118 years ago. A country which has organised what has become one of the most popular spectator sports and money-spinner is without a champion for the last 59 years.

The late Fred Perry, whose statue adorns the entrance to Wimbledon, was the last British men's champion. And Virginia Wade made her nation proud 18 years ago. Today there is hardly any name that can be mentioned as a possible prospect for a quarterfinal berth. Out of the nine women's entries this year six have received wild cards and it will be only a matter of days to know how many of them reach the next round. Jeremy Bates has been carrying the British flag at the Wimbledon.

But at 33 it is almost certain that he does not want to shoulder the responsibility any more. He reached the last 16 of men's singles last year. British hopes now circle round Montreal-born 21-year-old Greg Rusedski who will play for Britain. But this has generated some heat specially from another British player Mark Petchey. Though Rusedski's ranking has dropped from 47 to 54, a favourable draw, fast courts and his big serve which he gets from his height of 6ft. 3in. may take him to the next rounds.

Hosts clinch US Cup '95



PISCATAWAY, USA, June 26: The United States won the US Cup '95 tournament on Sunday, playing a goalless draw against Colombia in the final games of the four-team tournament, reports Reuters.

The Americans, who had won both their previous matches against Nigeria and Mexico, were content to settle for the draw that gave them one point and the title.

Colombia, looking to rebound from last year's humiliating exit from the World Cup, finished second in the competition, which was being used as a warm up for next month's Copa America in Uruguay. They had drawn 0-0 with Mexico and beaten Nigeria 1-0 last week.

The results by the unbeaten Americans augured well for interim coach Steve Sampson, who replaced World Cup coach Bora Milutinovic after he resigned two months ago. Sampson is likely to be given the job full-time.

The game in front of 36,126 fans at Rutgers University Stadium became bogged down in midfield in the second half as neither team appeared to want to risk making a mistake.

But the Colombians nearly

snatched victory with the last play, when defender Jorge Bermudez came up for a fierce

Collymore wants a piece of the cake

LONDON, June 26: England striker Stan Collymore's record-breaking 8.5 million pounds (13.6 million dollars) move to Liverpool is said to be in the balance over the player's belief he should have a slice of the transfer fee, reports Reuters.

Nottingham Forest, who "sold" Collymore to their Premier League rivals for a British record fee, reportedly insist that he is not entitled to any money from them and unless he agrees he will remain their player.

He wants five per cent of the fee, 425,000 pounds (680,000 dollars), but Forest manager Frank Clark says in The Mail on Sunday, "he would be entitled to a percentage if he was to be sold at our behest. We have done everything in our power to keep him."

"We will not move an inch. The fact is, that unless Stan drops his claim I expect to see him on July 10 for the start of pre-season training."

header from a corner. The ball beat American goalkeeper Brad Friedel, but was headed off the line by Mike Burns.

It was the first time the two teams had met since last year's World Cup, when the Americans shocked the soccer world by winning 2-1 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

That demoralising loss to the United States by the fancied South Americans contributed to their first-round exit from the World Cup and also led to the murder in Colombia later of defender Andres Escobar, who had conceded an own-goal in the US match.

On Sunday, the United States, which had scored seven goals in its previous two US Cup matches against Nigeria and Mexico, struggled offensively in the first half and had few chances aside from headers over the bar by the Thomas Dooley and Alexi Lalas.

In contrast, goalkeeper Friedel twice thwarted Colombian chances. Midway through the half he was lucky to kick out a Freddy Rincon shot that had deflected off Lalas and on the stroke of halftime he dived to his left to parry a Niber Arboleda header.

Mild-mannered Martinez



WIMBLEDON, June 26: Concita Martinez has quietly slipped into the All-England Club to begin the defence of her title, away from the attention that surrounds players like Steffi Graf, Mary Pierce or even some of the lower seeds, reports AP.

That's the way Martinez likes it. Ask her about fame — which seems to have eluded her almost everywhere except her native Spain — and she'll respond with half-hearted enthusiasm, at best.

"I like to go in the background," said the 23-year-old Spaniard, who faces Asa Carlsson of Sweden in her first-round match Tuesday on

Centre Court. "I don't like to be in the front. I'm very shy and I like to do my own thing. Sometimes if you are too famous, you don't have a private life."

Despite her performance in last year's final, Martinez played second-fiddle to Martina Navratilova in the nine-time champion's final Wimbledon singles appearance. It was one of those rare cases in which the loser was lauded, the winner nearly swept aside.

Martinez didn't mind, although her main regret is she didn't savour the victory more.

"I think if I won Wimbledon again I would do things differently," she said. "I would take it easy, relax a little bit more because I think last year I played too much after Wimbledon. I was happy that I was playing well and after that I think I played too much and I started going down a little bit."

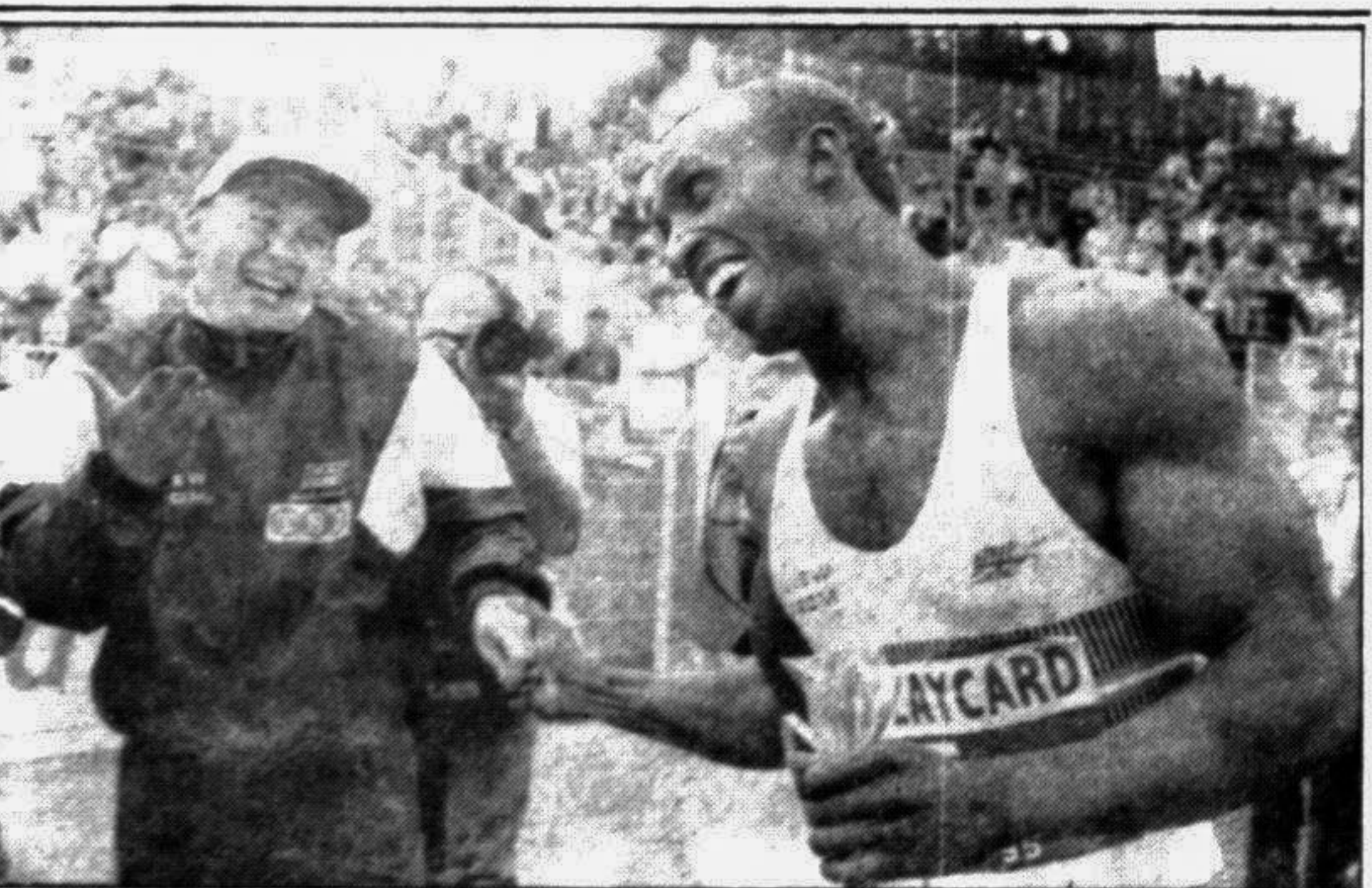
Early this year, Martinez slipped one place to No. 4 on the world computer rankings. Not a major collapse, but enough for coach Eric Van Harpen to get fed up with her renowned aversion to practice. She now works with Carlos Kirmayr, who guided her to the Italian Open title and the semifinals of the French Open. She's also back to No. 3 in the rankings.

Kirmayr's latest task has been to prepare Martinez, a baseline player whose best surface is clay, for the serve-and-volley attackers she'll again have to beat if she is to defend her title.

"(Before last year) I wasn't very comfortable on grass at

all," Martinez said. "I think I'm trying to be a little bit more aggressive and going a little bit more to the net. Actually, I'm doing a good job and learning a lot and hopefully you're going to see me more up there with some confidence."

Martinez was fortunate last year to go through the tournament without having to play five-time champion Steffi Graf, who was upset in the first round by Lori McNeil. The top-seeded Graf is again the overwhelming favourite this year.



Olympic champion Britain's Linford Christie is being congratulated by teammate Jonathan Edwards on winning the 100, 200 and 4X100 metres relay events at the European Cup athletics meeting in Lille, France on June 25.

Muster extends streak



ST POELTEN, Austria, June 26: French Open champion Thomas Muster won his 40th successive clay-court tournament on Sunday and then said he would completely ignore Wimbledon, reports Reuters.

Top seed Muster, playing before a sell-out crowd of 4,000 less than 100 kilometres from his home town Leibnitz, had an unexpectedly hard time beating unseeded Bohdan Ulihrach of the Czech Republic 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in the St Poelten final.

Muster, ranked fourth in the world, has decided to skip Wimbledon starting today, having lost in the first round in four previous attempts on the grass courts.

The Austrian said after winning on Sunday that he would not even watch Wimbledon on television and would pay no attention to the results until the two-week tournament was over.

"I'm going on holiday," Muster told a news conference. "I think I've earned it."

He said the television set in his Monte Carlo flat was broken and he did not plan to fix it.

"It's turned off and I'm going to turn off as well," he said.

But Muster, asked who he thought would win Wimbledon, offered the prediction that American Pete Sampras would successfully defend his title, with Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic and Germany's Michael Stich the next most likely victors.

Muster dropped a set in three of his five wins in the

tournament, his first since winning the French Open earlier this month, and had to fend off three match points in the first round to get past Filip Dzwulf of Belgium, ranked 140th in the world.

ATP rankings

MONTE CARLO, June 26: Leading singles rankings in men's tennis as released by the ATP Tour on Monday, reports Reuters.

1. Andre Agassi (US) 4,779 points
2. Pete Sampras (US) 3,873
3. Thomas Muster (Austria) 3,401
4. Boris Becker (Germany) 3,387
5. Michael Chang (US) 3,134
6. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia) 2,786
7. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia) 2,468
8. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa) 2,434
9. Sergi Bruguera (Spain) 2,218
10. Michael Stich (Germany) 2,187
11. Marc Rosset (Switzerland) 1,981
12. Magnus Larsson (Sweden) 1,840
13. Alberto Berasategui (Spain) 1,817
14. Jim Courier (US) 1,708
15. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands) 1,673
16. Stefan Edberg (Sweden) 1,671
17. Todd Martin (US) 1,619
18. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine) 1,565
19. Thomas Engvist (Sweden) 1,473
20. Andrea Gaudenzi (Italy) 1,383

On Sunday Muster needed one hour 25 minutes to beat Ulihrach, ranked 68th. Muster had beaten him 6-2, 6-2 in May in the Italian Open in Rome.

"He is an extremely fit young boy," Muster said of the 20-year-old Czech. "He wasn't even breathing hard after some of the longer points. He's very fit."

Ulihrach broke Muster once in the first set and three times in the second, which was interrupted by rain for 40 minutes.

Backed by the boisterous home crowd, Muster finally shifted into gear in the third set. Muster yielded just three points to seize a 3-0 lead in the final set before coasting through 6-1.

Even though there were no other players ranked among the top 20, Muster bristled at the suggestion the St Poelten entry was thin and he should have dominated the low-key tournament.

"It wasn't a weak field," he said sharply.

Muster said he felt he had played well but the pressures of being the local hero had weighed on him.

"It's difficult to play here (in Austria) because of all the surrounding circumstances that aren't there when you play abroad," he said. "You're being chased by all kinds of people... you have all sorts of obligations and appointments."

He said he would await the outcome of Wimbledon to decide which matches he would play in the next few months.

Edwards' leaps of fame



VILLENEUVE, France, June 26: Briton Jonathan Edwards flew right out of the record books in the European Cup superdivision on Sunday with the most astonishing series of leaps ever seen in the men's triple jump, reports Reuters.

Germany, successfully defended the men's title and Russia won the women's event but all the weekend's performances were overshadowed by an inspired Edwards, who twice jumped further than any man ever before but missed out on a world record.

The 29-year-old Briton jumped 18.43 metres and 18.39 metres on his second and fourth efforts but he had an excessive tail-wind in both cases, preventing him from breaking American Willie Bank's 10-year-old world record of 17.97 metres.

His two leaps were so long he looked as if he might fly out of the far end of the pit. They were both further than the best wind-assisted mark ever recorded — an 18.20-metre leap also by Bank in 1989.

"You can't really put words on that kind of performance," the stunned Briton, bronze medalist at the 1993 World Championships, said

afterwards. "Even without the wind I could have broken the world record."

That much looked certain as his tail-wind on the 8.43-metre leap was only 2.4 metre-per-second, marginally over the limit for record purposes of two metre-per-second.

Edwards' main compensation was that he did break his own British record with a jump of 17.72 metres the only one of his four attempts which was not wind-assisted. His opening jump of 17.90 was also aided by the wind.

Britain finished second to Germany in the men's competition, losing by 117 points to 107, but the other outstanding performance of the day and the weekend came from a much better-known Briton, World and Olympic champion Linford Christie.

Christie, winner of the 100 metres on Saturday, when he

Uruguay win

CANCUN, Mexico, June 26: Uruguay won an international youth (under-17) football tournament here Sunday when they beat Brazil 1-0 in the final when Gustavo Miccionico headed a 66th minute winner, reports AFP.

also anchored a winning sprint relay for Britain, was masterly in the 200 metres which he won with a devastating turn of speed out of the bend, clocking 20.11 seconds, close to his personnel best at the age of 35.

"I'm very surprised to have won and very surprised by the time," he said. "That's what I like about this kind of weekend. You're boosted up by the others' performances."

Christie had arrived in France with a large question mark against his name after some indifferent form this season and after the death of his mother during the week.

A strong German men's team, leading overnight, picked up three more victories on Sunday through Lars Riedel in the discus, Florian Schwarthoff in the 110-metres hurdles, profiting from the absence of British world record holder Colin Jackson, and Nico Motchebon in the 800 metres.

Spain and Poland finished in seventh and eighth place and were relegated for next year's event in Madrid.

In the women's competition, Russia won comfortably from Germany with 117 points to 100. Italy and Poland took the two relegation places.