



An exultant Arantxa Sanchez Vicario after knocking out fellow Spaniard and defending champion Conchita Martinez in the semi-finals of the Wimbledon Championships on July 6. Sanchez Vicario prevailed in a hard fought encounter 6-3, 6-7 (5-7), 6-1.

Clash of veteran & novice

LONDON, July 7: The women's final at Wimbledon will be played on Steffi Graf's turf. Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario may feel she is swimming against the tide when she takes on Steffi Graf for the All-England title on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The Spaniard has never gone so far before. Graf has won her last five title matches here.

Sanchez-Vicario admits she is a clay court player hoping to transfer her game to grass. Graf has already proved she can do that.

The German has already won 31 matches without defeat in 1995. Sanchez-Vicario has already lost two Grand Slam finals this year, to Mary Pierce at the Australian Open and to Graf at the French Open last month.

Graf has won 25 of her 33 matches.

But though Sanchez Vicario has won three of her last six clashes, including last year's US Open final, she will have to produce the totally unexpected on Saturday.

That, however, is something she has achieved in the past, most notably in the French Open final of 1989 when she scored a 7-6, 3-6, 7-5 triumph over Graf that astonished the tennis world.

Graf, who reached Saturday's final with a 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 triumph over Jana Novotna on Thursday, insists she will not underestimate the feisty Spaniard.

Sanchez-Vicario dethroned compatriot Conchita Martinez 6-3, 6-7, 6-1 in her semifinal.

Sanchez-Vicario did not know who her opponent in the final would be when she spoke about her hopes.

On the other hand, Graf said she

would always prefer to win easily.

She will be strongly favoured to beat Sanchez Vicario—even if she does not see it that way.

"It's going to be such a different match from today. But I am not underestimating Arantxa. She played very well and could have won easier."

"I won't feel I'm the favourite. I don't feel that at all."

Sanchez-Vicario has been trying to reach a Wimbledon final since 1987

and her joy at finally achieving the feat was clear as she screamed in delight and fell prostrate on the Centre Court.

Sanchez-Vicario showed against Martinez that she can hit the ball very hard indeed—occasionally. Unfortunately, Graf does it more often.

Still, the Spaniard feels she has progressed on grass this year, learning to make sporadic forays to the net where her volleying shows the touch

of the fine doubles player she is.

"I just think I have the quality to do well on different surfaces," said Sanchez-Vicario. "I've changed my attitude and I'm having much more fun."

"Now I'm, looking to maybe seeing if I can become the second Spaniard to win at Wimbledon."

But after the semifinals, British bookmakers gave her little chance. They made her a 11-4 underdog with Graf odds on at 1-3.



Steffi Graf of Germany gleefully points towards her fans after her semifinal win over Czech Jana Novotna at the Wimbledon Championships on July 6. Graf came from a set down to beat Novotna 5-7, 6-4, 6-2.

Victory vivifies Vicario

LONDON, July 7: Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario suffered a tactical breakdown in the second set before dethroning Spanish compatriot Conchita Martinez at Wimbledon on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Though in the end her semifinal victory was decisive, it should have come sooner.

She won 6-3, 6-7 (5-7), 6-1 after wasting a 5-2 lead in the second set and after leading 3-0 and 4-1 in the tie-break.

Sanchez Vicario said: "Until 5-2 I played with exactly the tactics I wanted. Then I stopped being aggressive, became a little tentative, and let her back in the match and the same thing happened in the tie-break."

"I should have won in two sets but what counts is the third set. I did what I had to do and won the match."

Now the winner of two French Opens and one US has a shot at the title she admits she has most wanted ever since she took her first French title in 1989 at the age of 17.

"I think ever since what I wanted most was to play in a Wimbledon final, it's a dream come true."

"It feels great. I passed the quarter-finals (for the first time). Now

winning this way gives me confidence to go into the final and I have to be very happy."

"Now I'm just going to see if I can go one more and win Wimbledon. It's every player's dream, you know, one year to win here on Centre Court."

Now that she has beaten the champion, Sanchez Vicario was asked about her rivalry with Martinez.

"It has nothing to do with her winning before and I hadn't," she said. "We're two different persons. I think it leaves you thinking that a clay court player can win on grass too."

"I just think I have the quality to do well on different surfaces. I have great results and I've changed my attitude and I'm having much more fun."

Martinez suffered from blisters through the match, meeting treatment on her left foot three times during the first set and then on her right foot at 3-0 in the third.

"They were taped but with the tape they were more painful so I had to have new tape put on and I got worse. So I took that off and it was a little better. Then the other foot started," she said.

Martinez first suffered the blisters in her quarter-final with Gabriela Sabatini. "You just have to play with the pain. It's painful to run, that's all," Martinez, also 23, said she did not

Arbi in qtrs

KUALA LUMPUR, July 7: World champion and top seed Heryanto Arbi of Indonesia put up a gruelling fight to reach the quarter-finals of the Malaysian badminton open Thursday after being stretched 15-8, 14-17, 15-10 by Malaysian Ong Ewe Hock, reports AFP.

Second seed Park Sung-woo of South Korea also made it to the last eight after struggling 7-15, 15-7, 15-1 against Indonesia's George Rimarodi.

Arbi, who blamed his dismal showing on Kuala Lumpur's heat and humidity, will take on South Korea's Lee Kwang-jin in today's quarter-finals.

"The heat here is unbearable," complained Arbi, who has never won a singles title in Kuala Lumpur.

The 23-year-old champion said although he had beaten Lee easily in the World Championships in Lausanne in May, "I dare not predict my chances against him here."

Third seed Ardy Wiranata of Indonesia had the easiest time in qualifying for the quarter-finals.

Wiranata's opponent, Yong Hock Kin of Malaysia, retired after losing the first game 3-15 in nine minutes.

Graf-Sanchez at a glance

WIMBLEDON, July 7 (AP): Head-to-head records of the women's final matchups at the Wimbledon tennis championships (seedings in parentheses):

Steffi Graf (1) (Germany) vs Arantxa Sanchez Vicario (2) (Spain)

Graf leads 25-8

Tournament	Surface	Round	Winner	Score
1988 United Jersey	Hard	R16	Graf	6-2, 6-0
1989 Family Circle	Clay	SF	Graf	6-2, 6-4
1989 Bausch & Lomb	Clay	SF	Graf	6-3, 6-2
1989 French Open	Clay	F	Sanchez	7-6 (8-6), 3-6, 7-5
1989 Wimbledon	Grass	QF	Graf	7-5, 6-1
1990 Pan Pacific	Carpet	F	Graf	6-1, 6-2
1990 Bausch & Lomb	Clay	F	Graf	6-1, 6-0
1990 Citizen Cup	Clay	F	Graf	5-7, 6-0, 6-1
1990 US Open	Hard	SF	Graf	6-1, 6-2
1991 Luthansa Cup	Clay	F	Graf	6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (8-6)
1991 French Open	Clay	SF	Sanchez	6-0, 6-2
1992 Bausch & Lomb	Clay	SF	Graf	6-7 (3-7), 6-4, 6-3
1992 Citizen Cup	Clay	F	Graf	7-6 (7-5), 6-2
1992 Luthansa Cup	Clay	F	Graf	4-6, 7-5, 6-2
1992 French Open	Clay	SF	Graf	0-6, 6-2, 6-2
1992 Federation Cup	Clay	R5	Graf	6-4, 6-2
1992 US Open	Hard	QF	Sanchez	7-6 (7-5), 6-3
1992 VS-Philadelphia	Carpet	F	Graf	6-3, 3-6, 6-1
1993 Australian Open	Hard	SF	Graf	7-5, 6-4
1993 VS-Florida	Hard	F	Graf	6-4, 6-3
1993 Lipton	Hard	F	Sanchez	6-4, 3-6, 6-3
1993 Family Circle	Clay	F	Graf	7-6 (10-8), 6-1
1993 Citizen Cup	Clay	F	Sanchez	6-3, 6-3
1993 San Diego	Hard	F	Graf	6-4, 4-6, 6-1
1993 VS Championships	Carpet	F	Graf	6-1, 6-4, 3-6, 6-1
1994 Australian Open	Hard	F	Graf	6-0, 6-2
1994 Delray	Hard	F	Graf	6-3, 7-5
1994 Hamburg	Clay	F	Sanchez	4-6, 7-6 (7-3), 7-6
1994 San Diego	Hard	F	Graf	6-2, 6-1
1994 Canadian Open	Hard	F	Sanchez	7-5, 1-6, 7-6 (7-4)
1994 US Open	Hard	F	Sanchez	1-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-4
1994 French Open	Clay	F	Graf	7-5, 4-6, 6-0

Clay 12 Sanchez-Vicario 4
 Hard 8 8
 Carpet 4 0
 Grass 1 0
 Total Sets 56 25
 Tiebreakers 3 7

Gritty Graf keeps going

LONDON, July 7: Steffi Graf added to Jana Novotna's personal catalogue of Wimbledon woe on Thursday to ensure the two top-ranked players in the world will contest Saturday's women's final, reports Reuter.

Graf, chasing her sixth Wimbledon singles title, was stretched to the limit by a desperate Novotna before securing a 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 victory which bore echoes of her dramatic Centre Court final recovery against the same opponent two years ago.

For a while, Steffi Graf actually felt she could lose to Jana Novotna. But the beginning of the second set I was thinking I'm going to lose this match. It's a semifinal, I'm going to have to wait another year. I didn't have a really good feeling," Graf said.

"You have moments when you think about these things but after a couple more games, I began to feel I could turn the match around."

Then in the third set I had such a great feeling of winning the match," the 26-year-old German said.

Graf won her Wimbledon semifinal 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, a scoreline which did not reflect the closeness of the battle because Novotna had three points to get back to 4-3 in the deciding set.

But Graf's success put her into a

Rome may join 2004 Games' boat

ROME, July 7: Italian Prime Minister Lamberto Dini announced on Wednesday he had appointed a committee to study the feasibility of holding the 2004 Olympic Games in Rome, reports Reuter.

"The cabinet has appointed a technical committee to evaluate as quickly as possible the conditions, needs, compatibility and cost," Dini said.

Rome hosted the Games in 1960. If the "Eternal City" decides to make a bid it will join Cape Town and Beijing as cities who have expressed interest in holding the 2004 Games.

Dini made his comments during a sports award ceremony in Rome attended by some 3,000 young athletes along with the heads of the Italian national Olympics committee and other sporting organisations.

Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, also at the ceremony, greeted the campaign for Rome to host the Games with enthusiasm saying: "It would be a battle well worth fighting."

Storm over Seles' status

WIMBLEDON, July 7: Top women players rejected a proposal to give Monica Seles special ranking considerations but she nonetheless plans a return to the tour next month, report agencies.

Seles is set to announce her comeback Saturday during a news conference at the Special Olympics in New Haven, Connecticut and is expected to play her first Grand Slam event in 2 1/2 years at the US Open in August.

First, Seles will play a televised exhibition with Martina Navratilova in Atlantic City on July 29. It is uncertain whether she will play any tour events before the Open. She's been practicing daily, coached by her father, and her comeback does not hinge on any allowances the WTA Tour makes for her ranking.

"I never asked for anything," Seles said Wednesday from her home in Florida, according to her spokeswoman.

Seles was stabbed in the back in Hamburg, Germany on April 30, 1993 by a deranged fan of Steffi Graf, who eventually replaced her as No. 1.

"Monica has never asked for special ranking consideration, and her decision on whether or not to re-



MONICA SELES

turn has nothing to do with that," said Linda Dozorcz, International Management Group's spokeswoman for Seles.

Graf and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario have been going back and forth as No. 1 over the past year. But some players objected, saying that Seles was No. 1 when she left and would come back as No. 1.

Navratilova then proposed at a WTA Tour meeting Sunday that Seles be co-ranked No. 1 for her first six tournaments or 12 months, whichever came first, and that for the next 18 months her ranking average be calculated differently from other players. In essence, Seles' ranking would be based on the number of tournaments she played, rather than the regular minimum of 12 within a 52-week period.

Navratilova's proposal was criticized in Sunday's meeting by several players, including Gigi Fernandez. Fernandez wouldn't have been affected by the proposal, but her friend, No. 3 Conchita Martinez, would have been.

The players said they wanted a couple of days to think about it. In another meeting Tuesday night, attended by most of the top 20 players along with agents, coaches and WTA officials, the proposal was shot down.

Graf, currently holding the number one ranking, has made it clear she would like to see the Yugoslav-born American return but doesn't think she should automatically be given top ranking.

"I don't agree with the proposals," the German player said at Wimbledon.

World number-two Arantxa Sanchez Vicario has also said she would be "unhappy" if Seles was given back her former status.

Graf objected because her back problems might not allow her to play the minimum 12 tournaments, which decide rankings, this year.

"Tennis needs Monica," said Graf after reaching this year's final at Wimbledon.

"The players need it. The media needs it. The tour needs it. I need it. I need a challenge," she said.

Gabriela Sabatini, eighth in the world and beaten by defending champion Conchita Martinez in the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Tuesday, said of a Seles return: "It is very tough to come up with something good for her and still be fair to the rest."

Navratilova, president of the WTA Tour, originally proposed that Seles be co-ranked No. 3 because

Wang won't defend crown in Gothernburg?

SHANGHAI, July 7: China's Wang Junxia will not be defending her 10,000 metres title at the World Athletics Championships in Gothernburg in August, Shanghai's Liberation Daily reported today, says Reuter.

Her coach Jiang Zomei said Wang, world record holder in the 5,000 and 10,000 metres, should prepare for the Atlanta Olympics next year instead.

"Judging from Wang Junxia's current condition it is impossible this August for her to beat the world in the way she did during the last championships," the paper quoted an official with the state physical culture and sport commission as saying.

"What a big shame it would be if she went to Gothernburg achieving miserable results, or even failed to rank among the top eight!" the paper said.

Wang, whose form had plummeted since breaking with super-coach Ma Junren last year, had barely scraped into China's team at the China trials in May.

Nepalese booter goes AWOL at Special Olympics

MADISON, Connecticut, July 7: Ramesh Mali, a Special Olympics football player from Nepal, disappeared here Thursday while swimming at an unguarded beach area, reports AFP.

Police and volunteers manned boats and helicopters in a frantic search for the 21-year-old sportsman, among 7000 athletes from around the world participating in the Special Olympics.

Mali was last seen in chest-deep water in the early afternoon, police said, adding that witnesses saw someone go under the water and fail to surface.

Mali was on an outing with 11 other competitors from Nepal and four escorts, including a volunteer host. Police said the volunteer took two Nepali visitors to safety because they were nervous, then could not find Mali upon returning to the area.

Tyson's undercard

LAS VEGAS, July 7: World Boxing Council champions Miguel Angel Gonzalez and Julian Jackson will be part of the undercard for Mike Tyson's return to the ring here next month, reports AFP.

Unbeaten WBC lightweight champion Gonzalez, 37-0 with 29 knockouts, will defend against another unbeaten, Lamar Murphy, 18-0 with 13 knockouts. Gonzalez will make his 10th defence of the title he won in 1992.

Three-time world middleweight champion Jackson (51-3 with 47 knockouts) will defend against Quincy Taylor (25-3 with 21 knockouts). It will be Jackson's first defence of the crown he won last March.

Already announced on the 19 card headlined by Tyson fighting Peter McNeeley is a World Boxing Association title match between Joe Hipp and champion Bruce Seldon.

Super-marathon runners hit the road

MOSCOW, July 7: Thirty runners from eight European countries took off from Moscow's Red Square on Wednesday on a four-week 5500-km journey, covering half of the European continent, reports AFP.

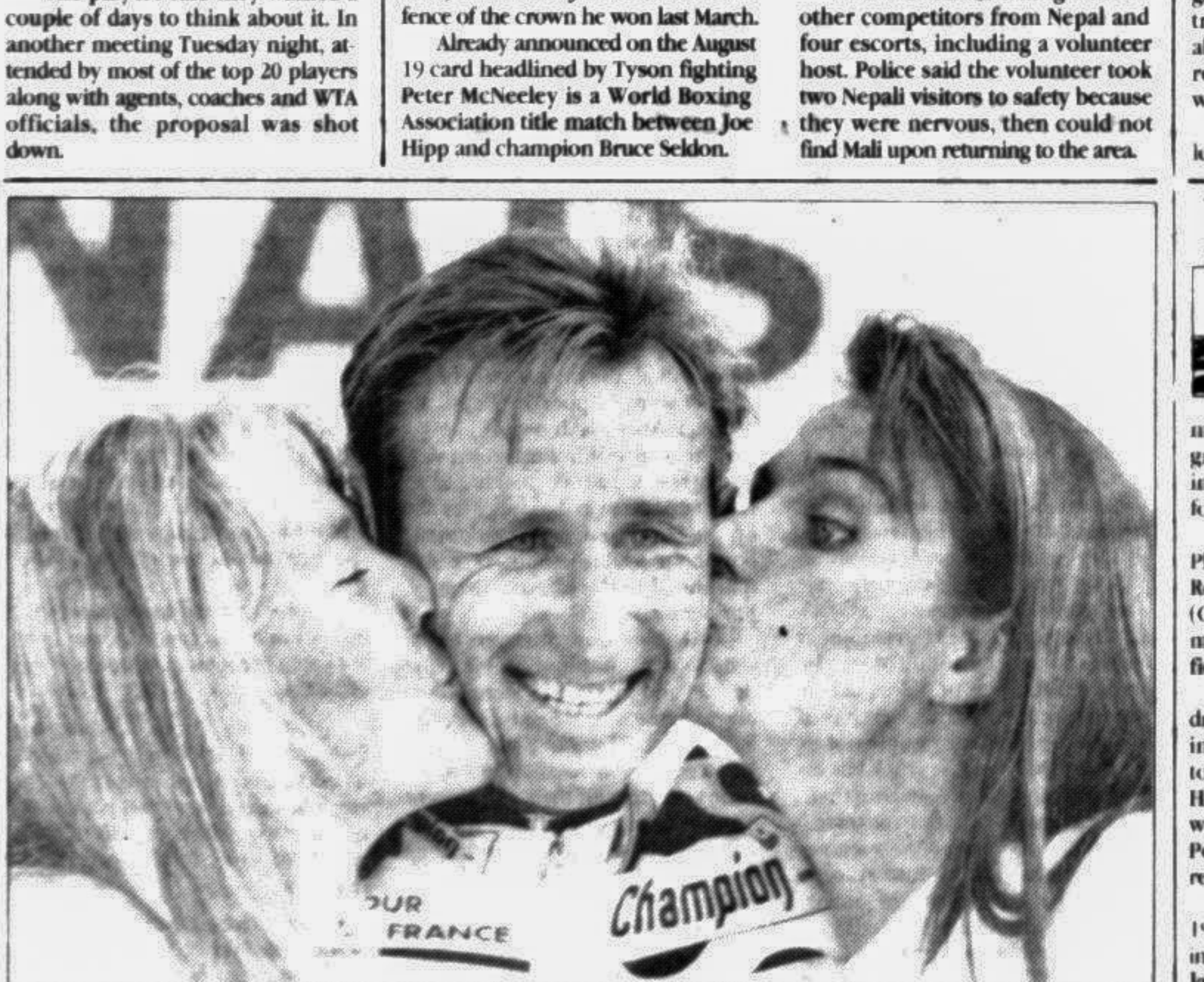
The International super-marathon "Moscow-Paris" will go through capitals of Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and France, before finishing on the town's hall square in Paris on July 31.

The runners will pass a relay torch from one another, and only stop on days off in each European capital.

The fourth marathon commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II has a motto of "peace, friendship, goodwill and co-operation."

The super-marathon is headed by the sports and government organisations of Russia and France.

Heaven on earth: Russian cyclist Dimitri Konyshv gets big smacks on his cheeks from two gleeful on lady admirers after his fifth leg victory in the Tour de France cycling classic at Dunkerque on July 6.



HEAVEN ON EARTH: Russian cyclist Dimitri Konyshv gets big smacks on his cheeks from two gleeful on lady admirers after his fifth leg victory in the Tour de France cycling classic at Dunkerque on July 6.

'96 Games prep on track

ATLANTA, July 7: With the 1996 Summer Olympic Games just over a year away, construction is on schedule and within budget, the head of the Atlanta Olympic Committee said Thursday, reports agencies.

"Our construction programme is really now starting to reach its final stages," said Billy Payne, president of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG). "A year out from the Games, the construction programme's fine."

Olympic organisers are building venues for aquatics, archery, athletics, basketball, cycling, hockey and tennis competitions. A 170 million dollar 85,000-seat Olympic stadium is to be completed by next spring.

"Despite the complexity of organising the Games, and they are extraordinarily complex everything about our development essentially remains on schedule, on time and within budget," Payne said.

Ticket sales are at projected levels, Payne said. However, an effort

to sell personalised bricks in a 21-acre Centennial Olympic Park under construction in downtown Atlanta has been less than successful.

"The brick sales have been slower than we had hoped," said Payne. ACOG has sold 160,000 of the 35 dollar bricks and a group of Japanese organisations has announced it will buy up to 100,000 more.

"Somehow it was claimed to be disrespectful that the Japanese would be helping us, which I think is exactly the wrong interpretation," Payne said. "The Olympic Games are about folks coming together."

In the case of the Japanese Olympic Committee wanting to help sell bricks, their motivation was the fact that the Americans were so responsive to the relief campaigns and gestures that immediately followed the recent earthquake.

"This was their way of saying how much they appreciate our responsiveness," Payne said.

Payne said one of his crucial jobs in the final year before the Olympics is to get Atlanta to live with a traffic plan banning most cars from downtown.

"We need to communicate effectively to the public and to our visitors of the need to cooperate," Payne said. "It's important that we do that well."

Asked to identify other major points that need to be resolved, he listed completing the nuts and bolts work of operating the venues, including security provisions and food service, and finishing the details of the opening and closing ceremonies.

The traffic management plan will close most downtown streets to individual cars during the 17 days of the Games, July 19-August 4.

ACOG is encouraging people to use public transportation and is asking businesses to revamp work schedules so that employees can travel during off-hours. Buses and trains will carry spectators to Olympic events, most of which are being held in the central city.

On another matter, Payne vowed that the Olympic yachting competition would be held as planned in Savannah, despite continued criticism of the coastal Georgia site by the president of the federation that governs the sport.

Paul Henderson, president of the International Yacht Racing Union, most recently complained that the marina planned by ACOG is too small. Henderson previously threatened to move the event.

Payne, however, said the Savannah site is firm.

On another subjects, Payne said:

He is confident ACOG will meet its 1.58 billion dollar budget, though fund raising will probably continue up until the Games begin. "Money never fades," he said. "We'll be raising money until the end of the day."

He would like to see an Olympic museum established in Atlanta after the Games. The International Olympic Committee operates a museum in Lausanne, Switzerland, but there is no such facility in the United States.

Rouse on a crusade

PHOENIX, USA, July 7: Double Olympic swimming medalist Jeff Rouse, concerned about drug use as the 1996 Summer Games approach, is conducting a grassroots petition drive among international athletes in a campaign for random testing, reports AP.

"I love this sport too much," the Phoenix swimmer told The Arizona Republic before Friday's Santa Clara (California) Invitational. "We have to make sure we have a level playing field."

Rouse, 25, was to announce his drive at a news conference before the international competition that was to feature Rouse's teammate, Gary Hall Jr of Phoenix, in a showdown with Russian sprinter Alexander Popov on Saturday. He said he already has collected 450 signatures.

Rouse won a gold medal at the 1992 Barcelona Games for his opening leg in the US men's 400 medley relay. He won a silver medal in the 100 backstroke.

"I don't want this to be divisive in any way," he said. "It's simply an awareness issue. Athletes have never

spoken up as a group on this matter."

Rouse said he fears that, with innocent athletes being accused after great performances, the drug use problem could overshadow the Games in Atlanta. He noted the 19 positive tests involving Chinese swimmers in the four years since the Barcelona Games and their having been banned from next month's Pan-Pacific Games.

"There are some athletes who don't even know they're being given the drugs. There are some who know exactly what they're doing," he added.

"As it now stands, the doping control system that is used to identify performance enhancing drugs taken during training periods is ineffective," he said. "Some laboratories are able to perform accurate tests, but frequent and systematic testing is not being done."

"Despite the increase in awareness spurred by the recent rash of positive tests, it is simply too easy for an athlete or coach to abuse the system. The result is that dirty athletes can compete at an international level without getting caught," Rouse said in a prepared statement.

Bulgarian duo on the move

SOFIA, July 7: Bulgarian international defender Trifon Ivanov of CSKA Sofia has signed a two-year deal with Rapid Vienna of Austria, Bulgarian soccer officials said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Financial details of the transfer were not disclosed.