Seles enters US Open

NEW YORK, July 15: Monica Seles officially entered the US Open on Friday, lining up her first Grand Slam tennis appearance since she was stabbed in the back in 1993, reports AFP.

"We couldn't be happier," said US Tennis Association spokeswoman Page Crosland.

"We were anticipating it, we've been waiting for her and we're delighted."

It is not yet known if Seles will be seeded, whether she will have a ranking that would put her in the main draw or whether she will be given a wild-card.

"The only thing we know is that she has applied for entry and it was received today," Crosland said.

Seles won eight Grand Slam titles, including two US Opens in a row, before she was stabbed April 30, 1993 in Hamburg, Germany.

She was ranked number one in the world when the stabbing occurred, but has since dropped out of the rankings.

A proposal to co-rank her at number one upon her return to competition was rejected by several top players at a WTA tour meeting during Wimbledon, although WTA tour president Martina Navratilova, now retired from singles play, was in favour of the special status.

Seles will launch her comeback with an exhibition match against Navratilova on July 29 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Her competition schedule after that is not yet known.

Indonesian Open

Bang to meet Susanti in final

JAKARTA, July 15: Bang So-hyun of South Korea shot her way into the women's singles final after thrashing compatriot Kim Ji-hyun in the semifinals Saturday of the Indonesian Open badminton championship, reports AP.

Bang, seeded first in the 170,000 dollars tournament, easily took the first set 11-1 but had to fight hard in the second set before ending it 12-11.

Bang will take on second seeded Indonesian ace Susi Susanti, who eliminated Swedish shuttler Lim Xiaoping, 11-5, 11-5.

In men's singles matches, all Indonesian affairs, Ardi Wiranata stopped world champion Heryanto Arbi, who had to retire from the second set due to a right-leg injury as Ardi led 15-13, 10-7.

Former world champion Joko Suprianto disposed of Alan Budi Kusuma 15-9, 15-11.

In another all-Indonesian affair, Gunawan and Bambang Suprianto defeated Ade Sutrisna and Chandra Wijaya in the men's doubles. They will face off compatriots Antonius and Deni Kantono, who eliminated Tony Gunawan and Rudy Wijaya, both also Indonesians.

The women's doubles finals will be an all-Chinese affair.

Fei Ge and Juu Gu defeated Lisbet Stuer-Lauridsen and Markene Thomsen of Denmark 15-7, 15-1. Yu Yuan Qin and Yongsu Tang beat the Japanese pair of Aiko Miyamura and Akiko Miyamura, 15-6, 15-5.

Players from 19 countries, also including Malaysia, Britain, the United States and New Zealand have participated in the tournament that concludes Sunday.

The Indonesians were assured a title in mixed doubles.

Tri Kusharyanto and Minarti Timur disposed of Dong Moon Kim and Yong Ah Gil of South Korea, 15-9, 7-15, 15-6, while Flandy Limpele and Risyeu Rosalina defeated compatriots Paulus Irianto and P Agustasia, 15-9, 15-2.

'Jt venture' gains ground

ROME, July 15: Borussia Dortmund and Real Madrid will team up with Italian against Juventus and AC Milan in a new business joint venture, Milan general manager Adriano Galliani said in an interview published on Friday, reports Reuter.

German champions Dortmund and their Spanish counterparts Madrid have agreed to cooperate with the Italians in a venture which is intended to cover areas such as television rights, worldwide marketing and lucrative overseas tours.

"After Germany and Spain, England and France will be the next countries to join our operating programme," Galliani told the Gazzetta Dello Sport. The newspaper said that Arsenal and Paris St Germain were believed to be keen to get in on the deal.

Traditional rivals Milan and Juventus announced last week that they were joining forces commercially in order to maximise their earning power.

Their agreement has attracted the interest of Italy's anti-trust authority which wants to make sure that it does not breach rules on free competition between soccer clubs.

Galliani insisted that this would not be the case.

"It's one thing to open a chain of shops with another club or to organise a friendly tournament together but rivalry on the pitch and in the transfer market is quite a different matter," he said.

The clubs involved in the venture have, however, done a fair amount of transfer business among themselves in recent seasons.

Roberto Baggio moved from Juventus to Milan in this summer's biggest Italian deal while stopper Huergen Kohler was the latest in a series of players to leave the Turin club for Dortmund.

John Markes (top) of the United States joins his teammates to celebrate one of the three goals against Argentina during a Copa America match in Paysandu, Uruguay on July 14. The Americans stunned Argentina 3-0 forcing them to a quarterfinal clash with world champions Brazil. — AFP/UNB photo

America abase Argentina

PAYSANDU, Uruguay, July 15: The United States scored a historic 3-0 victory to humiliate pre-match favourites Argentina Friday and finish top of Group C in the Copa America and there was dancing in the streets of La Paz after Bolivia came back from the brink to force a 2-2 draw with Chile to also claim a quarterfinal berth, report agencies.

The Americans now play Mexico for a place in the last four while Argentina's failure puts them into an immediate quarterfinal showdown with title-favourites Brazil.

The other quarter-finals will be between Colombia and Paraguay, and Uruguay and Bolivia.

Argentina's pride took a drubbing when the United States, magnificently prepared by Steve Sampson, found the net not once but three times — their scorers being Frank Klopas, Alexis Lalas, and Eric Wynalda.

Klopas scored off a corner kick in the 21st minute John Harkes corner went to the far goalpost and was knocked back across the goal area by Cobi Jones. Klopas slammed it from 15 yards (5 metres) low to the right corner.

Defender Lalas scored in the 32nd minute. Jones beat his man on right wing, crossed the ball from the end line and Lalas tapped it in.

Wynalda connected at 59 minutes on a quick break. He passed to Joe-Max Moore who had to slide to get to the ball, which deflected off a defender directly to Wynalda. He put it into an empty net.

Argentina did not start all of their regulars, they substituted liberally and had mostly first-stringers on the field in the second half. By then, the United States led 2-0.

The Americans lost their captain, defender Marcelo Balboa, who strained a muscle in his buttocks in the 16th minute. Yet their defence held the powerful Argentines scoreless, with goalkeeper Kasey Keller making several key saves.

Argentina, unbeaten in their opening matches after beating Bolivia 2-1 and Chile 4-0, were hustled and bustled off the ball by determined opponents from the start, and towards the end of a match which saw ten players booked, their frustration was clearly surfacing.

Earlier, in the same group, Bolivia notched up a surprise when they came from 0-2 down put them through to the quarterfinals.

Chile looked to have the match sewn up when Ivo Basay scored twice midway through the second-half — but Miguel Mercado (78) and Mauricio Ramos (87) pulled Bolivia level.

The result was enough to put Bolivia through.

West Ham bag Boogers

LONDON, July 15: English Premier League club West Ham completed the signing of striker Marco Boogers from Dutch side Sparta Rotterdam for one million pounds (1.6 million dollars) on Friday, reports Reuter.

The tall, 28-year-old Dutchman, who has scored 103 goals in 280 games despite playing for several years as a winger, is seen as the ideal striking partner for Tony Cottee.

"We are pleased to buy a quality striker for such a reasonable fee and it proves that value for money can still be found despite the present level of transfer fees in the UK," said Peter Strorrie, the London club's managing director.

Bruguera's Swiss reign ends

GSTAAD, Switzerland, July 15: Outsider Jakob Hlasek beat Swiss compatriot Marc Rosset 6-3, 6-4 here today to book a showdown against Russian second seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the final of the 550,000-dollar Swiss Open, reports AFP.

Hlasek, the 30-year-old former world number seven whose ranking has since slipped to 124, tossed the formbook aside with his upset win over the Olympic champion.

Kafelnikov ended a three-year run of success for Spain's Sergi Bruguera, defeating the third seed 6-4, 6-3 in the days other semifinal.

Kafelnikov, the 21-year-old world number seven, needed less than an hour to claim a final place.

He was dominant under cloudy skies at the 1,100-metre high venue, levelling his career record against the 24-year-old Spaniard at 2-2.

"I never thought that I could beat Sergi on clay," he said. "I played unbelievably. I really thought I had almost no chance today."

Hlasek, who played his last semifinal in April last year in Sun City, South Africa, brought the big-serving Rosset to his knees in their Centre Court match.

The veteran, who reached the Gstaad final in 1988, before losing to Australian Darren Cahill, said he had played " a good match."

"I stayed at a high level and concentrated hard." Rosset, beaten for the first time in four matches by his fellow countryman, said: "I must have left my brain at the hotel."

Hlasek added: "I was going to play doubles with Kafelnikov here, but he told me he was too tired. I hope he is still tired for our final." Until his defeat to Kafelnikov, Bruguera had not lost in 18 matches at Gstaad, winning the title for the last three years. But his form has yet to recover five months after undergoing knee surgery.

"I feel no pain in the knee but I am not playing at my best," he said. "I have played poorly here all week."

After losing the first set, Bruguera was broken 0-2. He settled into his rhythm but it was too late.

Kafelnikov produced a service winner in the ninth game for match point, then sent a backhand to the Spaniard's feet to earn his fourth final place of 1995.

"This is my best win ever on clay," he said.

Earlier, Bruguera beat compatriot Jaiver Sanchez 7-5, 6-1 in the quarterfinal, while Kafelnikov defeated seventh-seeded Andra Gaudenzi 6-1, 6-4.

Bruguera, winner of the last three editions of this high-altitude event, has failed to win a single AFP title since Prague last summer, and bowed out of his defence of the French Open title in May in the semifinals to Michael Chang.

Bruguera fell heavily in February in Stuttgart and underwent an operation days later. His best showing since was in the final of the Italian Open, where he was beaten by Austrian Thomas Muster.

Kafelnikov's victory over the world number 20 Italian Gaudenzi was his first in three attempts; Qaudenzi won both of their previous meetings - in the first round at Estoril last year and at Monte Carlo last April.

"I played a solid match," said the Russian Davis Cup player, never a man of many words. "I don't know if the public here is looking for a new champion. But I'm prepared to try and give them one."

Hlasek saw off Marcelo Rios of Chile 7-6 (7-5), 3-6, 6-2 in his quarterfinal, while Rosset pulled off a 6-3, 6-4 win over Frenchman Arnaud Boetsch to reach his first semifinal of 1985.

The two-hour, 20-minute battle was up-and-down all the way. But Hlasek's experience paid off in the end as the teenaged world number 50 made more unforced errors when his rival kept up the pressure.

Hlasek stands at number 124 after reaching seventh on the computer in 1989.

Due to months of poor form, Hlasek is now having to duck the obvious questions about when he might give up the game.

"My goal is to play tennis," he said. "I don't think that the time has come to stop. No one asks anymore how I'm playing, but when I will quit. I get two or three calls per week at home asking about my plans."

Medvedeva moves into semis

PALERMO, Sicily, July 15: Natalia Medvedeva upset top-seeded Karina Hasbudova 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 Friday to move into the semifinals of the 107,500 dollars Palermo Grand Prix tennis tournament, reports AP.

In another quarterfinal match between unseeded players, Austrian Barbara Schett made short work of Czech-born German VERONIKA Martinek 6-3, 6-1.

Medvedeva, the No. 7 seed in the Sicilian tournament on clay, won the decisive third set as Habsudova, a Slovak player ranked 27th in the WTA lists, made an impressive series of unforced errors in the last three games and was ousted from the competition.

Medvedeva, a Ukrainian, will play in Saturday's semifinal against fifth-seeded German Sabine Hack, who beat Italy's Flora Perfetti 6-3, 6-0.

Scheet was to take on the winner of the quarterfinal between defending champion Irina Sprilea of Romania, the No. 2 seed, and sixth-seeded Italian Silvia Farina.

The WTA tournament of Palermo awards a top prize of 17,500 dollars.

Sir Stanley summoned

LONDON, July 15: Soccer legend Sir Stanley Matthews is to play again — at the age of 80.

The former England wing wizard, won 54 caps from the age of 19 to the unbelievable age of 41, will play 15 minutes for Beazer Homes league club Clevedon Town in a friendly match against Bristol City on Sunday, July 30.

Clevedon's manager, Steve Fey, met Sir Stanley when he spoke at a dinner in the Somerset town early in the summer.

"It was a bit cheeky but as joke I asked him if he would consider signing on as a player for us," said Fey.

"I nearly fell backwards when he said 'yes' but I jumped at the chance. I had a Beazer league registration from with me, hoping to sign another player, so I got Sir Stanley to sign it there and then.

"I asked him what he had earned in the 1953 FA Cup final and he told me 4.18 shillings.

"I offered him double that, threw in a little extra and got him for a tenner. It has to be the steal of the century."

Matthews, immortalised by the so-called 'Matthews FA Cup final' in 1953, was the first footballer awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 1957 and the first to be knighted in 1965.

The match at the Hand Stadium is in honour of Clevedon's retiring president Dough Hand and entrance is free.

Christie fails to qualify

BIRMINGHAM, England, July 15: World and Olympic 100 metres champion Linford Christie failed to qualify from the heats at the British national championships today, reports Reuter.

Christie, who eased up near the line, finished fourth in 10.93 seconds and missed going through to the semifinals as one of the fastest losers.

The 35-year-old Christie, who had won the event for the past four years and was chasing a record eighth success, later had treatment for a knee injury.

Christie, who defends his world title in Gothenburg next month, refused to comment but British Athletics Federation spokesman Tony War said: "Linford has been suffering from a tight tendon behind the right knee all week. He tried to cruise it but eased down too much at the end."

Shot putter suspended for doping

LONDON, July 15: British shot putter Guy Marshall was suspended today after testing positive to "proscribed substances" at an inter-area match in May, reports AFP.

The result of 23-year-old Marshall's B sample confirmed that of his A sample, the British Athletic Federation (BAF) said in a statement.

Tony Ward, spokesman for the BAF, said: "It's always disappointing to get a drugs finding, but it does show the efficiency of our testing system."

Marshall was ranked 54th in Britain last year. He is 17th in the latest list for this season.

The announcement came as Britain's top athletes prepared to compete at the national championships in Birmingham.

The meeting doubles as the World Championship trials, with the team for Gothenburg to be picked on Sunday night.

Old foes renew rivalry

Passarella bites dust

RIVERA, Uruguay, July 15: A disastrous miscalculation by Argentina coach Daniel Passarella has landed his team with a quarterfinal clash with old enemies Brazil in the Copa America, reports Reuter.

Passarella also wrecked the plans of the tournament organisers who had intended to keep Argentina, Brazil and hosts Uruguay apart for as long as possible.

Argentina appeared to be cruising as they beat Bolivia 2-1 and hammered Chile 4-0 to guarantee their quarterfinal place with a first round match to spare.

Passarella then decided to rest his best players for the final match against the United States, assuming that the reserves would still be good enough to win the one point needed for Argentina to finish top to the group.

That would allow them to stay in Paysandu for their quarterfinal where they would have faced a relatively straightforward game against one of the best third-placed teams.

However, Passarella overlooked the enormous improvement made by the United States in the past two years, their progress being underlined by wins over England two years ago and Colombia in the World Cup last year.

With striker Gabriel Batistuta, who scored 26 goals for Fiorentina in the Italian Championship last season, suffering a miserable night, missing several easy chances, Argentina were beaten 3-0.

That pushed them into second place and they now face a trip to Rivera where they will take on a Brazil side who have improved with every game.

After needing late goals to overcome Ecuador 1-0 and Peru 2-0, the world champions steamrollered Colombia 3-0 for their eighth successive victory.

A bout of flu appeared to have helped coach Mario Zagalo find his best side. Defender Ronaldao and midfielder Zinho were sidelined against Colombia and their replacements both performed well.

Andre Cruz, who nullified the threat posed by Colombia striker Faustino Asprilla, was more solid than Ronaldao had been before, while Leonardo, who scored Brazil's first goal, gave the team more attacking options than Zinho.

However, Zagalo is known to admire Zinho's tactical discipline and may give him another chance in the game on Monday.

The other doubt is whether Zagalo persists with Edmundo, who was ineffective against Colombia and left the field visibly angry when he was substituted.

His replacement Tulio scored with a bicycle kick after two minutes on the field.

Organisers had been hoping the two teams would meet in the semifinal and that, if everything had gone to plan, the winners would have met Uruguay in a showpiece final.

They could suffer another blow as Uruguay, despite winning their group, look incapable of progressing much further.

Local support has been lukewarm with the Centenario Stadium,site of the first World Cup final in 1930, never more than half full while coach Hector Nunez on Friday appeared to resent all the praise being heaped on Brazil's players.

"Why does everyone talk about Savio and Tulio all the time," he said on Friday, referring to two of the Brazilian strikers.

Uruguay's quarterfinal on Sunday is against Bolivia, who beat the United States and were unlucky to lose 2-1 to a full-strength Argentina.

The Bolivian side has been together for years and the players have excellent understanding.

Sunday's other game sees Colombia face Paraguay.

The Americans' reward for beating Argentina is a tie with Mexico in Paysandu on Monday.

Mexico, who have looked disjointed and lethargic, will be out for revenge after losing 4-0 to the Americans in the US Cup last month.

Egypt thru' to Nations' Cup

JOHANNESBURG, July 15: Egypt booked a place at the 1996 African Nations' Cup finals despite being held to a 1-1 draw at home by Algeria in a Group Four qualifying match Friday night, reports AFP.

The Pharaohs, who have lifted the cup three times, top the standings with 13 points followed by Algeria with 11, Uganda with eight and Tanzania, Sudan and Ethiopia with six each.

Algeria completed their 10-match programme on July 28 at home to Tanzania and a victory would assure them a berth at the 16-nation tournament, which begins January 13 in South Africa.

Ghana, champions a record four times, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Zambia and Burkina Faso have already reached the biennial finals, while hosts South Africa and holders Nigeria were automatic qualifiers.

The Cairo result was a personal triumph for former Algerian star Ali Fergani, who replaced Rabah Madjer as coach after the national team was held at home Uganda last month.

With home advantage and the partisan backing of a near-capacity 100,000 crowd at the Nasser Stadium, Egypt were expected to avenge a 1-0 defeat in Algiers last January.

But it was the visitors who struck first as veteran forward Kaci Said gained possession on the edge of the penalty area in the 42nd minute, turned a defender and slammed the ball into the roof of the net.

The goal stung the lethargic Egyptians to life and a series of second-half assaults on the Algerian goalmouth paid off in the 61st minute when Ibrahim Al-Masry equalised with his first cup goal.

Al-Masry rounded to defenders before sending a swirling shot past the slow reacting Algerian goalkeeper to ensure Egypt retained their unbeaten home record in the qualifying competition.

Algeria caused another scare among local supporters soon after the equaliser when a long-range shot flew just over the crossbar with the Egyptian goalkeeper beaten.

The first match between the countries in Cairo since an ill-tempered World Cup tie six years' ago went off without incident and it was played in good spirit.

Concerned about the threat of violence, the authorities placed thousands of police and troops in riot gear inside the giant stadium in the heart of the Egyptian capital.

Muritain, one of the weakest African football nations, broke a 10-year victory drought in the competition by defeating Togo 2-1 in a Group Two match in Nouakchott.

Ahmed Sidibe put the home team ahead after 14 minutes, Magaye Wademadeit 2-0 after 59 minutes and Ouadje Lantam snatched a consolation goal for the Togolese with six minutes left.

It was Togo's final fixture and Mauritania, whose last success was in 1985 against Liberia, complete their programme on July 28 at home to Tunisia.

Graham to appeal against ban

LONDON, July 15: George Graham is set to appeal against the 12-month ban imposed by the Football Association, according to a report Friday, reports AFP.

The former Arsenal manager was handed the ban after being found guilty of misconduct relating to transfer "bungs" following a three-day hearing before three FA commissioners.

He had also been ordered to pay part of the costs of the hearing and has 14 days in which to lodge an appeal.

No figure has been put on the costs but, with three barristers and seven other lawmen involved in the commission, it could exceed six figures.

According to Friday's Daily Mail, an appeal is Graham's most likely next step and he could take the matter to the high court.

"They are giving me no option but to appeal," he quoted as saying, "I will sit down with my solicitors in the morning to decide whether that will be to a higher FA board within the 14 days they have allowed or in the high court for the right to pursue my trade."

Graham's counsel had made a plea for leniency at the hearing and that was taken into account by the FA Commission.

But Graham continued: "In reality, because I've been kept out of work for five months already, this is an 18-months ban.

"But the hidden damage in this sentence is financial and it is excessive how do they expect me to meet their costs if they don't want me to work?

"Compare this to what has happened to big clubs found guilty of serious financial irregularities and tell me whether this punishment is fair and reasonable."

Graham claimed in the Mail that he was being used as a scapegoat for the controversy over soccer "bungs."

He said: "I am absolutely gutted. They are using me as the whipping boy, what has happened to the rest of the Premier league inquiry while I've been almost destroyed? Have all the other cases hinted at gone away?

"It's not for me to point the finger at any other individual and I would never do that. But is this what I deserve for coming clean and repaying the money?

"Arsenal abandoned me without so much as a gesture to all the trophies and the millions of pounds I brought to the club. As well as losing my job I've been pilloried.

"Is this justice for putting all the cards on the table? The commission conceded what I have contented from the start, that the money was an unsolicited gift. They found that I had not negotiated the transfers for personal gain.

"Legally, it does not appear now that they even had the right to try me at all. But they watched me turn down a number of management offers.

"I played it straight with them but where would they have been if I had taken the job at Manchester City? I do believe they would have been empowered to order the to sack me.

"As I have maintained all along, I have not profited from any transfer, they convict me of receiving payments but that money, plus interest, is in Arsenal's bank account, not George Graham's.

"I hope the Arsenal fans remember that and, from the letters I have been receiving, I believe they do."

The FA expects FIFA, the game's governing body, to endorse Graham's suspension and to police it worldwide.

Argentine superstar Diego Maradona trains with his club Boca Juniors in Buenos Aires on July 14. Maradona who is serving a fifteen-month drug ban will miss the first seven weeks of the Argentine League before resuming his playing career with Boca in September. — AFP/UNB photo

Tapie in endless abyss

GENEVA, July 15: The president of the European Football Union (UEFA) said on Friday new charges of bribery by Marseille would be referred to the French Football Federation for investigation, reports Reuter.

"All we know at the moment is what we have gleaned from newspaper reports. This is not enough. We need firm evidence," Lennart Johansson of Sweden said.

"We will ask the French football authorities to look into them to establish if there is any truth in them, if at all. We discussed the matter briefly at our executive committee meeting today and this is what we decided."

According to newspaper reports more allegations or match-fixing during Marseille's five-year reign as French champions emerged from police investigations in to fraud at the club.

Former Marseille general manager Jean-Pierre Bernes has claimed that Marseille bought five or six matches a season from 1989 to 1993.

There have also been allegations that Marseille fixed UEFA's European Cup tie to obtain a 1-1 draw against AEK Athens in November 1989, after the French side beat AEK 2-0 in Marseille.

Bernes claimed his club also bought a European Cup match against Spartak Moscow later that year.

Former Marseille owner Bernard Tapie is appealing against a two-year prison sentence for ordering Bernes to fix a league match against Valenciennes in 1993.

Graft on AFC body's agenda

KUALA LUMPUR, July 15: A soccer panel entrusted to fight match-fixing in Asia will hold its first meeting in Kuala Lumpur next week, the national Bernama news agency reported on Friday, reports Reuter.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) anti-graft panel will bring together representatives from Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam and Indonesia during the meeting on Monday.

AFC secretary Peter Velappan said the panel would carry out in-depth study on soccer rigging in Asia and formulated a plan to fight the problem.

"It is hoped that this will be a clear indication that the AFC will not tolerate any such evil activities that will bring the game into disrepute and eventually destroy football in Asia," Velappan was quoted as saying.

The meeting is to be chaired by Ghazali Yacub, Malaysia's police director of internal security and public order.

Malaysia has been the region's biggest crusader against soccer corruption and has arrested more than 130 football players and officials to date for suspected match-fixing.