

Titas, Rifles in NBL v'ball final

Sports Reporter
Defending champions Titas Club and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) set up a title deciding clash on Saturday after winning their respective semifinal engagements of the NBL volleyball league at the court adjacent to the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.
In the first semifinal Titas Club recorded a facile 15-7, 15-7 and 15-10 win over Police Athletic Club while five-time champions BDR, who were declared *bete noire* by the Bangladesh Volleyball Federation (BVF) last year for their alleged involvement in a clash during a national championship semifinal engagement at Kushtia, also earned a comfortable 15-8, 15-11 and 15-4 win against last year's runners-up Power Development Board.
The third-place play-off between Bangladesh Police and Power Development Board will take place today.
Food and Agriculture Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will witness the final and distribute prizes among the winners.



Action from yesterday's Lifebuoy First Division football league encounter between Badda Jagorani and Eskaton Sabuj Sangha at the Dhaka Stadium. Badda Jagorani won 1-0. — Star photo

Kanan's boys march on



Sports Reporter
Former national custodian Sayed Hassan Kanan may have lost his credentials under the bar, but he proved himself a promising coach when his team Badda Jagorani Sangsads moved into the top of the Lifebuoy First Division football league with a lone goal win over Eskaton Sabuj Sangha at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.
Striker Zahed notched the deciding goal three minutes from time with an intelligent back-volley over onrushing Eskaton goal-tender Kismat many outings.
In the second match of the day, Victoria Sporting Club shared honours with Sadharan Bama in a goalless encounter.
For Victoria the outcome was not inspirational at all, after fielding their two Pakistani recruits for the first time.
For Tariq Oman, the striker, and compatriot Ayub, making their debut in Dhaka football, their performance was not something to write home about.
Away at the Mirpur Stadium East End Club, who also

have three foreign booters in their ranks, relied on their locals to earn a hard fought lone goal win over Police Athletic Club.
After a barren first half Kawshik scored the match winner in the 73th minute of proceedings.
It was the old town outfits second win in the league to collect eight points from five matches, while with this defeat Police, who were the other promotee to the First Division this year, remained stuck to their previous collection of three from five engagements.

STANDINGS

Standings of the two-tier Senior Division football leagues on completion of five matches yesterday.

Lifebuoy Premier League:

Teams	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Muktijoddha Sangsads	4	1	0	11	2	13
Abahani KC	4	1	0	6	0	13
Brothers Union	2	3	0	6	3	9
Mohammedan SC	2	2	1	5	2	8
Youngmen's Club	1	3	1	5	3	6
Agrani Bank	1	1	3	2	7	4
Arambagh KS	0	3	2	1	4	3
Wari Club	0	3	2	2	6	3
Farashganj SC	0	3	2	0	4	3
Rahmatganj MFS	0	2	3	2	9	2

Lifebuoy First Division League:

Teams	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Bangladesh Boys	3	1	1	8	3	10
Badda Jagorani SC	3	1	1	5	3	10
Sadharan Bama KS	2	3	0	6	2	9
East End Club	2	2	1	5	5	8
Dhanmondi Club	2	1	2	5	6	7
Victoria SC	1	4	0	3	2	7
Eskaton SS	1	2	2	5	8	5
Shantinagar Club	1	2	2	2	4	5
Police AC	0	3	2	2	4	3
PWD SC	0	1	4	5	9	1

Pioneer soccer results

Sports Reporter
Gazipur Ekadosh recorded an emphatic 4-0 win over Chaitali Club in one of the nine Pioneer Division football league engagements at the Mohakhali T&T ground yesterday.
Monirul opened the winners' account from an early fifth minute strike while Bakar doubled the margin in the 17th minute. Monirul gave Gazipur a 3-0 lead at the breather, scoring his second goal three minutes later. Raqibul struck ten minutes from the final whistle, a goal that eventually sealed the fate of the match.
Among the other matches, six matches ended with 1-0 scorelines and the two remaining were drawn.
Rampura Natun Kuri Sangshad beat Badda Jagorani Sangshad (Junior) at the T&T Ground with Tareque scoring for the winners.
At the RAJUK ground adjacent to the Dhaka Stadium, Badshah Samri Sangshad and Rising SC defeated K R Boys and Azimpur Kishore Sangha respectively.
Railway Blues sauntered past Abokash Tarun Sangha at the Dhupkhola Metropolitan ground while Mukti Khe-laghor prevailed over Parada-gar Krira Samaj Kalayan Parishad at the Jagannath College and University ground.
Shawdesh Samaj Kalyan Sangha outplayed Golam Mostola Lane Kishore Sangha with Guddu scoring the only goal for the victors at the Dhanmondi Club ground.
Tejgaon Nabataranga Krira Samajik and Sangskritik Parishad drew, 1-1, with Modhubagh Friends Club at the Dhanmondi ground.
Mati of Pravat Sangha and N. Jalpara Juba Kalyan Samiti produced a goalless draw at the same venue.

Nantes begin defence

PARIS, July 20: French soccer champions Nantes opened the defence of their title on Wednesday with an unconvincing 1-0 home win over Auxerre, reports Reuter.
Nantes scored after 10 minutes through midfielder Reynald Pedros, who converted a fine pass by newcomer Jocelyn Gourvenec.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

- Lifebuoy Premier Division football league:**
Agrani Bank SC vs Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool (4:30 pm Dhaka Stadium).
Arambagh KS vs Rahmatganj MFS (6:30 pm Dhaka Stadium).
Pioneer Division football league:
Arambagh KG vs Kendriyo Kishore Kafela (4 pm RAJUK ground).
Suryoshena SC vs Nabab Katara KC (2:30 pm Dhanmondi Club ground).
Lalbagh Krira Chakra vs Dogair Chand Tara Club (4 pm Dhanmondi Club ground).
Monsoor Sporting Club vs Isampur Utaran KC (2:30 pm Dhupkhola metropolitan ground).
Aganagar PMS vs Diba Sangshad (4 pm Dhupkhola metropolitan ground).
Eastern Football Club vs Jatrabari KC (4 pm Jagannath College and University ground).
Utara Friends Club vs Angels Club (2:30 pm Banani ground).
Jubashikha Sangshad vs National Football Training Club (4 pm Mohakhali T and T ground).
NBL First Division volleyball league:
Power Development Board vs Bangladesh Police (4 pm volleyball court).

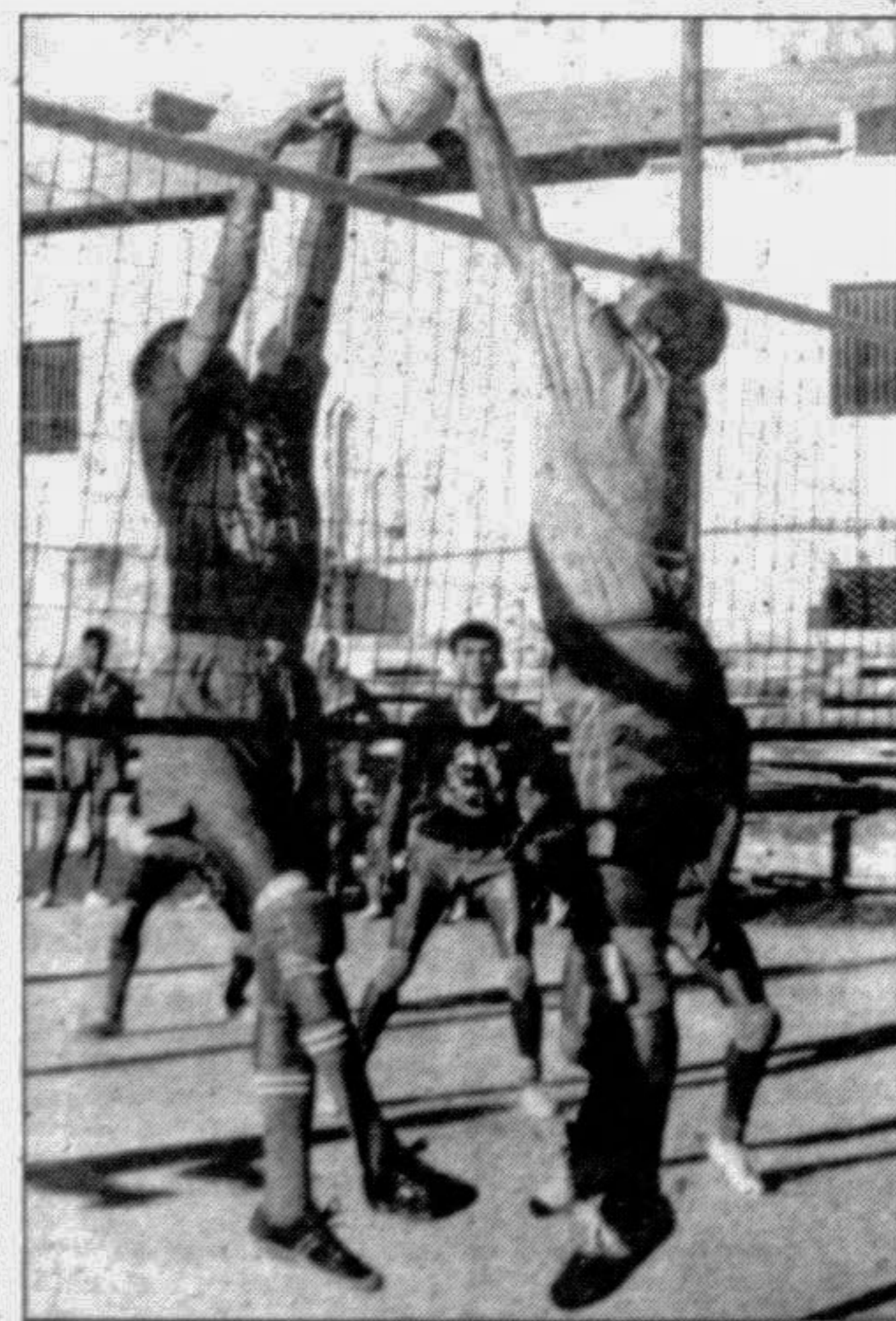
Shaon shines for Siddheswari

Sports Reporter
Shaon dazzled with both the willow and the ball to propel Siddheswari Sporting Club to their third successive win in one of the three Lotus-Kamal Second Division qualifying cricket league matches played at different city venues yesterday.
At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium opener Shaon hammered a quickfire 29 off 31 balls as Siddheswari, sent in to bat, scored a fighting 145 before being all out with one ball to spare in their quota of 35 overs.
In reply, Media Cricket CC were shot out for 125 in 33.5 overs in the face of a devastating spell from Shaon to suffer a 20 run defeat.
Shaon, who consumed the heart of the Media Cricket innings, finished with a haul of four for 40 in his quota of seven overs.
With this win Siddheswari are one match away from qualifying for the eight-team Super League as Group H champions.
They will now take on Shaheedbagh Cricket Club, who suffered a crushing 56-run defeat at the hands of Kalyanpur Housing Estate CC at the Jagannath Hall ground in another billing of the day.
In a low scoring match, Shaheedbagh chasing a modest Kalyanpur total of 133 for eight were bundled out for a paltry 77 in 25.1 overs.
Kalyanpur, thanks to their changed bowlers Sultan and Saifur Rahman, tore apart the Shaheedbagh batting lineup with telling accuracy.
Sultan claimed four wickets for 22 in his seven overs while Saifur Rahman finished with an enviable analysis of four for only eleven runs.

Agassi romps
WASHINGTON, July 20: Andre Agassi began his road to the hard courts of next month's US Open with a convincing 6-2, 6-2 victory over France's Rodolphe Gilbert at the Legg-Masson tennis tournament on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Medvedev exits

STUTTGART, July 20: Fifth-seed Andrei Medvedev slumped to a second round defeat at the hands of Frenchman Arnaud Boetsch at the Stuttgart tennis tournament here on Wednesday — his second early exit in two weeks, reports AFP.
The world number 17 and holder of the 1992 title here, let an early lead slip away against Boetsch, ranked 47 in the world, to lose 1-6, 6-1, 6-4.
French Open champion Thomas Muster put a week of disappointment behind him to beat Marcelo Rios of Chile 6-2, 6-4 for a third-round berth.
Number three Sergi Bruguera went through in straight sets against Peru's Jaime Yzaga, 6-4, 6-3.



Action from the NBL First Division volleyball league semifinal between Bangladesh Rifles and Power Development Board at the volleyball court yesterday. The Riflemen moved into the final beating PDB 15-8, 15-11, 15-4. — Star photo

DMFA's timely initiative

Sports Reporter
Organisers the Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA) has requested the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to bring foreign referees to officiate the return leg of the ongoing two-tier Senior Division football leagues.
In a letter to the BFF on Wednesday, the governing body of the country's football, DMFA termed the local referees as incompetent to run crucial league matches.
They further added that they got letters from different clubs, who had vehemently protested sub-standard of refereeing in the leagues.
Meanwhile, the DMFA has also brought on S M Monirul from Khulna to ensure some good refereeing.
Monirul, who has over the years set a standard of being probably was surprisingly ignored by most of the leading clubs.
Early this year a bearded Monirul proved his worth in the Bristol SAARC Gold Cup tournament in Sri Lanka.

Rookie robs Lara

CANTERBURY, England, July 20: West Indian Brian Lara's low key tour came under examination again on Wednesday after he was dismissed for a duck by a rookie bowler on the opening day of his side's three-day match against Kent, reports Reuter.
Lara survived just three deliveries from Kent pacesman Julian Thompson — a doctor when not playing cricket then edged the fourth to continue his surprising sequence of disappointing scores.
The world record-breaker is alone among the eight specialist-West Indian batsmen not to have made a century so far on tour.
Seventeen innings in all cricket have brought Lara seven scores of 50 or more hardly disastrous but not quite what the public expect from a man who last year made 375 against England and took 501 off Durham.
"If Brian makes 50, people's perception is that he's failed," said tour manager Wes Hall. "Today he got a good ball. Someone will pay."
Thompson eventually paid for his cheek conceding 72 runs from 11 overs as the tourists reached 337 all out at the close.
But earlier the 26-year-old had struck twice in the space of five deliveries to leave the visitors reeling on nought for two.
Test opener Sherwin Campbell was bowled second over by a ball that struck him on the body and rolled back into the stumps, then Lara pushed defensively forward, made only faint contact and was caught by wicketkeeper Steve March.
They were the fourth and fifth first-class wickets of Thompson's career, his appearances so far having been limited to just three in two seasons.

Stewart may miss 4th Test

LONDON, July 20: England were unable to plan their strategy for next week's crucial fourth Test against West Indies on Wednesday after Alec Stewart ruled himself out of Surrey's next match with a bruised finger, reports AFP.
His withdrawal from the game starting on Thursday could mean England will have to find themselves another opener — and a new wicket-keeper — as England seek to level the series at Old Trafford next Thursday.
CARLSBAD, California, July 20: Top-ranked Steffi Graf has pulled out of the Toshiba tennis classic because of back problems that bothered her at Wimbledon and the French Open, reports AP.
"I know she did everything to get here," co-promoter Jane Stratton said Wednesday. "It's something she can't play through."

Graf pulls out

Sidek survives a toughie
SINGAPORE, July 20: Malaysian ace Rashid Sidek had to summon all his experience to defeat an Indonesian rookie for a quarterfinal berth in the Konica Cup Singapore international badminton championships on Thursday, reports AFP.
Sidek, the joint sixth seed in the men's singles, was given a fright by aggressive left-hander Arief before emerging with a hard-fought 15-12, 15-11, victory in 61 minutes.

Hosts in Copa America final Uruguay upset Columbia



MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, July 20: Uruguay, with veteran Enzo Francescoli setting up both goals, advanced Wednesday night to the final of the Copa America with a 2-0 victory over Columbia, report agencies.
Edgardo Adinolfi, who was playing only because of an injury to striker Daniel Fonseca, but Uruguay ahead in an even but lacklustre encounter in the 52nd minute.
Striker Marcelo Otero wrapped the game up for Uruguay 18 minutes later. Uruguay will face either Brazil or the United States, who meet today, in Sunday's final.
Uruguay, who have hosted the Copa America six times before and won on every occasion, have progressed through the competition without every looking spectacular apart from the first 30 minutes of their quarter-final with Bolivia.
Despite the importance of the game and the presence of the home team, the 75,000 capacity Centenario Stadium was less than half full and most of the first-half was played in a mournful atmosphere.
Local commentators blamed the poor turn-out of just 28,000 on ticket prices, with the cheapest places costing 35 dollars.
A boggy pitch which severely hindered the players

added to the melancholic scene, producing a desperately poor advertisement for South American soccer.
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A boggy pitch which severely hindered the players

Uruguay coach Hector Nunez once again decided to leave out-of-form striker Ruben Sosa, who has had an unhappy season in Italy with Internazionale, on the substitutes' bench.
Instead, veteran Enzo Francescoli moved into attack and Adinolfi was brought into midfield.
Although they had the advantage of home backing, Uruguay showed little enthusiasm for attacking early on.
Their only two decent efforts in the first-half were a dipping shot by full-back Gustavo Mendez following a run in which he dribbled past two defenders and a weak shot by Francescoli, comfortably saved by Columbia goalkeeper Rene Higuita.
Columbia had more possession but as usual their football was unproductive.
The crowd, who barely made a noise in the first-half, were woken from their apparent slumber when Adinolfi scored in the 52nd minute, appropriately for such a scrappy game, he tapped the ball following a goalmouth scramble.
Faustino Asprilla came close to equalising for Columbia when he just failed to make contact with Wilmer Cabrera's low cross but Uruguay got the killer second goal in the 70th minute.
Gustavo Poyet crossed from the right and striker Marcelo Otero volleyed the ball into the net for his third goal of the tournament.



Diego Dorta (L) of Uruguay having a time of celebration with the scorer of his team's first goal against Columbia during their Copa America semifinal clash in Rivera on July 19. Uruguay eliminated their much fancied opponents with a 2-0 win. — AFP/UNB photo

Steffi to share top slot

NEW YORK, July 20: Monica Seles will return to tennis competition with her old ranking as well as her piercing two-fluted groundstrokes, WTA Tour Players' Association president Martina Navratilova confirmed Wednesday, reports Reuter.
Navratilova, who will play Seles in a welcome-back exhibition match Saturday, July 29, in Atlantic City, said a formal announcement that Seles would be ranked as co-number one with Steffi Graf would be made later this week.
"I'm playing against the number one player in the world as far as I'm concerned," Navratilova said in a tele-conference call. "The only fair way for Monica to come back is as number one because that's where she was when she left."
Seles, 21, will be playing her first competition match since being stabbed by a deranged fan April 30, 1993, during a Hamburg tournament.
"I'm sure I'll be nervous but at the same time excited," said Seles, speaking from her home in Sarasota,

Florida. Seles said hitting with Navratilova last may encourage her to come back.
"When I played with Martina I thought, 'wow, this is fun why am I not doing this?'" Seles said. She dismissed suggestions by John McEnroe that the match with Navratilova has been fixed in her favour.
"That's a bunch of baloney," she said, unleashing her once-familiar giggle. "I've never been told to win or lose and I'm not going to start in this case."
An anticipated crowd of 9,000 and an international television audience is expected for the exhibition match at the Atlantic City convention centre.
Seles is expected to be guaranteed the number one ranking for at least her first six tournaments, taking her through the US Open, which she has signed up to play.
Seles says she is eager to relieve the success she was just starting to enjoy when she won the Australian Open title in January 1993.
"That was the first time I felt happy being number one," Seles said. "And then the whole thing happened so soon after. I was stopped at my peak. Now I have a chance to play great tennis again and do something I loved to do."
Prior to the US Open, Seles said she planned to play at two tournaments, naming Los Angeles, San Diego and Toronto as possibilities.
Seles, who last competed at the US Open in 1993 when she won the title, said missing the Grand Slam events was the most painful loss during her absence.
Navratilova, who worked hard to bring Seles back to tennis, said the sport missed her.



MONICA SELES

Atlanta invites 197 nations

ATLANTA, July 20: With one year to go before opening ceremonies, Atlanta's Olympic organisers gathered their troops on Wednesday for a dawn pep rally and then told reporters the city will be ready for the expected 10,000 athletes and two million visitors, reports Reuter.
Ceremonies in Lausanne, Atlanta and New York marked the final year of preparations which began in September 1990 when Atlanta was chosen over five other cities for the Centennial Games of the Modern Olympics.
In Lausanne on Wednesday, Billy Payne, president of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, and Juan

Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, issued formal invitations to 197 nations for the 1996 Games.
Two hours later, in a steamy car park outside the half-completed Olympic stadium, former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, now co-chairman of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), spoke to some 1,500 cheering employees.
"When Billy Payne walked in to my office with this impossible dream, it took a bunch of lunatics to believe that we could pull it off. Well, welcome to the crazy," Young said.
With the ceremonial one-year milestone this month, Atlanta has come under close scrutiny by international

news media eager to determine the state of the city's preparations.
Journalists arrived to find Atlanta gouged from end to end by massive construction projects, all racing the clock to next July, and a swarm of apparently minor, but nagging, problems.
This week, ACOG officials conceded that at least two Olympic Village dormitories have begun to settle in the soggy Georgia soil, but claimed the problem will be fixed shortly.
Also in Atlanta Wednesday, the temperature hit 37 degrees Celsius for the fourth time this month, prompting reporters to question Samaranch about the potential peril for athletes competing in the city nicknamed "Hotlanta".