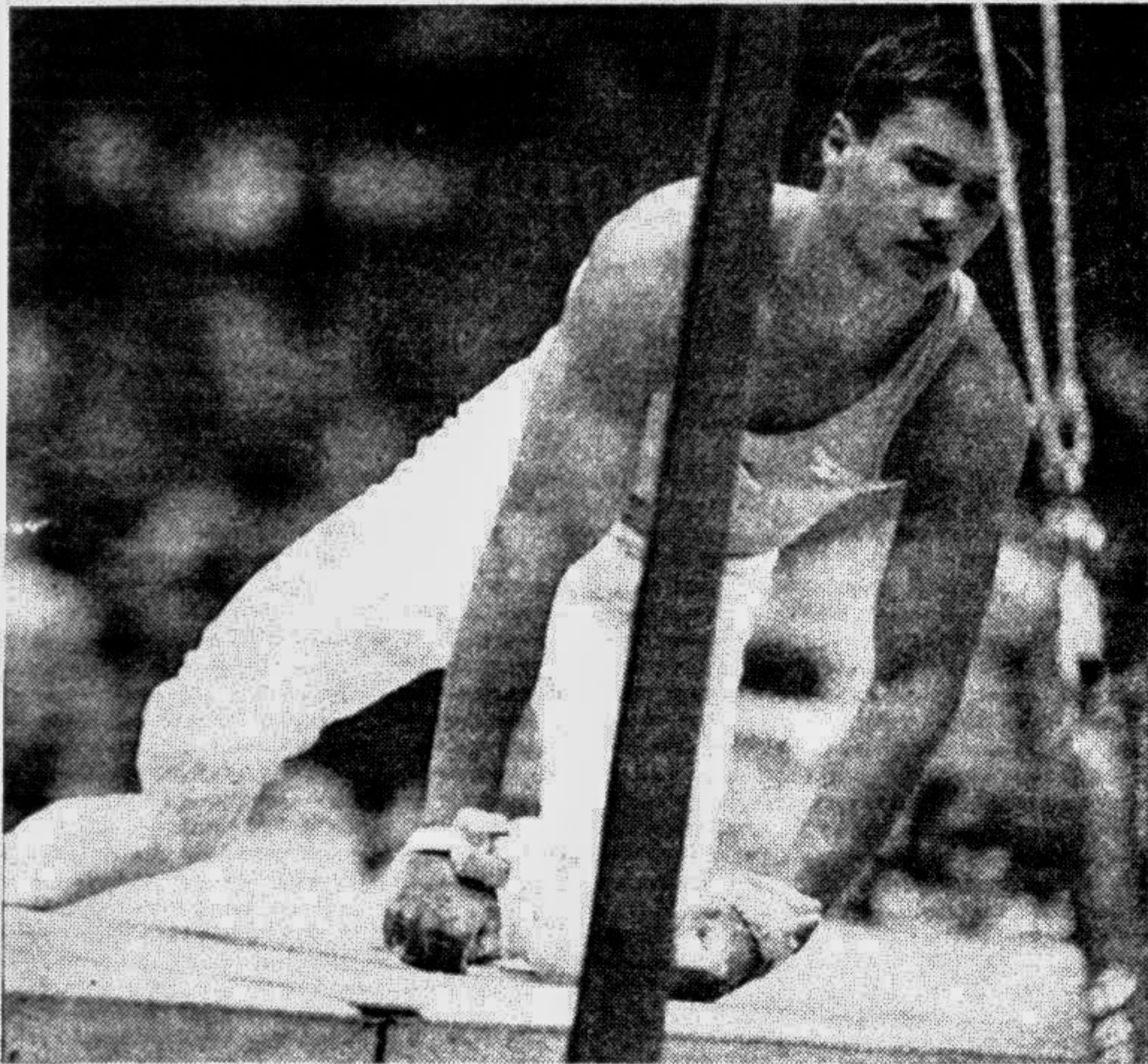


# Some solace for Russians

SABAE, Japan, Oct 4: Russia's women redeemed a dismal performance by their nation's men at the World Gymnastics Championships Wednesday, bumping China off third place, but left Romania and the United States unchallenged as leaders, reports AP.

Stunningly dressed in pink and black, Russia started with a 9.537 by Natalia Bobrova on the beam and never looked back, showing grace on the floor, power in the vault and control on the bars for a total 191.408



Russia's Alexei Nemov tries to stand up after falling from the high bar during the men's team compulsory event at the 1995 World Gymnastics Championships in Sabae, Japan yesterday.

formed erratically, leaving Japan, China, the United States and Romania on top.

Russia's men, second only to world champion China in 1994, scored just 276.537 points in the compulsories and stood 11th out of 24 teams competing.

Only Dmitri Karbonenko, standing 22nd, and Evgeni Chabaev, 40th, appeared to give Russia's chance of reaching the individual all round finals. Alexei Voropaev, the silver medalist in 1994, stood 51st after the compulsories this time.

Belarus, whose team narrowly missed a bronze medal

Hikaru Tanaka at 56.800.

Vitaly Scherbo, winner of six gold medals at the 1992 Olympics, moved into third with 56.674.

Still Scherbo, who lists picking mushrooms among his hobbies, summed up his performance with one word: "Bad."

Scherbo's teammate, defending champion Ivan Ivankov, stood 61st, and scored 7.275 on the bar after falling.

Coach Vatkini said Ivankov was treated in Israel and Germany for a shoulder injury this summer and then hurt the other shoulder, dis-

## Happy birthday Hingis!

ZURICH, Oct 4: Swiss youngster Martina Hingis, who just celebrated her 15th birthday, defeated Amy Frazier of United States in the first round of the European indoors tennis tournament Tuesday, reports AP.

Hingis, who has shot up to No 17 in the world rankings since her professional debut one year ago at the Zurich tournament, won 6-3, 6-7 (1-7), 6-3.

In the first upset of the tournament, Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic topped sixth-seeded Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 3-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-4.

In other first-round action, eighth-seeded Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands defeated Belgium's Nancy Feber 6-3, 6-1; Joannette Kruger of South Africa advanced 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 against American Lori McNeil; Marianne De Swardt of South Africa defeated Kristie Boogert of the Netherlands 7-6 (8-6), 6-2; American Marianne Werdel-Wittemyer defeated Nathalie Tauziat of France 6-4, 6-2; and seventh-seeded Iva Majoli of Croatia defeated Helena Vildova of the Czech Republic 5-7, 6-3, 6-1.

Jana Novotna, the world's sixth-ranked player, is the tourney's top seed.



Nantes' Raynald Pedros (C) is about to control the ball on his thigh while Frank Dumas (R) of Monaco looks on during a French First Division encounter in Nantes yesterday. The teams tied 2-2. — AFP/UNB photo

## Pioneer soccer

A brilliant double hatrick by striker Sumon steered his side Deeba Sangsad to a big 11-0 victory over Swadesh Samaj Kalyan Sangsad in their Pioneer Super League encounter held at the Rajuk ground on Wednesday afternoon.

Sumon, who had scored only one goal in the Pioneer League before yesterday's match, netted seven goals for his side in the 5th, 15th, 19th, 21st, 35th, 39th and 53rd minutes while Shah Alam added two in the 55th and 57th minutes. Besides then, Mustaq and Humayun scored one goal apiece for the winners.

In another match, Uttara Friends Society beat Painadi Jubo Sangsad 2-1 in the day's other Super League match.

Belayet and Akram slotted one goal each for the winners in the 10th and 21st minutes respectively while Arman pulled back one for Painadi boys in the 38th minute.

## Star-paved Aussie Open

MELBOURNE, Oct 4: Monica Seles will aim to win her fourth Australian Open women's singles tennis title in January, tournament organisers said Wednesday, reports AP.

Seles, who was beaten in the final of the US Open by Steffi Graf, is making a comeback after taking more than two years out of the sport. She was stabbed in the shoulder by a deranged fan in Hamburg, Germany, in April, 1993.

Tennis Australia president Geoff Pollard announced at the official launch of the tournament that Seles had indicated she plans to contest the opening Grand Slam event of the year, which will feature record prize money of 9 million dollars (6.88 million US dollars).

Pollard said the prize money was an increase of 11 per cent in Australian dollar terms on that for this year's tournament. Winners of the men's and women's singles will receive equal prize money of 562,000 dollars (429,000 US dollars).

He said the tournament would offer double the previous computer points to participants, almost double the size venue and the best field in its 90-year history.

"All the stars have indicated they will be here in January. Every top name is expected," Pollard said.

He said Andre Agassi of the United States and Mary Pierce of France had said they would defend their singles titles.

Pollard said the prize money for women's events would be 90 per cent of that paid to the men, a ratio higher than any other Grand Slam event other than the US Open.

He said stage two of developments at the National Tennis Centre, which will add two further stadium courts and eight other match courts, will be completed in time for the tournament, which will run from Jan 16-29.

The show courts will have seating capacity for 3,000 and 1,500 spectators, giving the venue five permanent stadium courts.

## Top trio to play in WTA meet

NEW YORK, Oct 4: Steffi Graf, Conchita Martinez and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario have qualified for the WTA Championships, to be played Nov 13-19 at Madison Square Garden, reports AP.

Previously, Monica Seles was given a special wild-card invitation to play in the 16-player, year-ending tournament. It can be used if she doesn't play her way into the field.

Graf, who won the US Open, Wimbledon and French Open this year, is a three-time winner of the tournament, winning in 1987, 1989 and 1993. A fourth title would tie her with Chris Evert in second place for most singles titles in the tournament history. Martina Navratilova has won eight singles crowns.

Martinez, who has won six titles in 1995 and reached the semifinals in all four Grand Slam tournaments, actually leads in the year-long points race to qualify for the WTA Championships. The Spaniard has accumulated 4,113 points.

Sanchez Vicario is third with 3,805 points.

Seles, who missed more than two years after being stabbed in the back during a tournament in Hamburg, Germany, has earned 1,100 points — which puts her in 15th place — in two tournaments. She won the Canadian Open and was runner-up in the US Open.

## Simpson acquitted but ...

HONG KONG, Oct 4: From the United States to China and Britain to New Zealand, the world gasped with disbelief at O J Simpson's acquittal on double murder charges in "the trial of the century," reports Reuters.

People virtually everywhere waited with tense anticipation for the verdict in the true-life soap opera that began on June 12, 1994 with the murder of the former American football star's ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ron Goldman.

Only in a very few places, notably France, were the trial and the verdict treated with indifference. No TV or radio station interrupted regular programming to carry the verdict live: instead the all news LCI television channel and the all-news Radio France-Info carried full reports on the verdict well into their regular newscasts.

News of the acquittal jolted America, prompting both relieved cheers and incredulity. It surprised both those who believed Simpson innocent and those convinced he was guilty — opinions that often divided along racial lines.

Britain's best-selling tabloid newspapers were sceptical about the acquittal. "What a farce — circus sets O J free to make millions," said Today newspaper's headline. The Daily Star declared: "O what a sick joke. Money talks — O J walks."

The Sun, devoting its first three pages to the case, called the verdict "the biggest surprise in legal history."

Vienna's daily Die Presse, Austria's most reputable broadsheet, pushed its deadline back by more than an hour to include the verdict in Wednesday morning editions. "Triumph for O J Simpson — he's free," it blared on the front page.

"It's a story that the whole world has fooled," the paper's evening copy editor Alexander Fieber said. "It doesn't involve Austria in any way and a year ago hardly anyone knew who O J Simpson was. Now everyone knows ..."

New Zealand morning radio and television led on Simpson, virtually a complete unknown in New Zealand before his trial, although the verdict came too late for morning papers.

Former Prime Minister and opposition Member of Parliament, David Lange, a lawyer, said the case appeared to conform with an old British jury saying that it was better to let a guilty man go free than convict an innocent man.

Most Australians were asleep when the verdict came, leaving them to wake up to radio bulletins dominated by reports of the acquittal and then a deluge of talk-back calls from mostly astounded people.

Callers said they could not believe the verdict and blamed his well paid defence team for using the race card to obscure the evidence. One caller to Australia's most popular talkback show was so angry she began crying during the phone-call.

While Hong Kong's three English-language papers gave the O J Simpson verdict front-page treatment with extensive coverage inside as well, the Chinese press neither gave it their front pages nor their sympathy.

If anything, several major Hong Kong Chinese papers ridiculed the entire affair — Simpson, the nine-month long televised trial, the numerous witnesses and the surprisingly brief jury deliberations.

In China, Shanghai's Liberation Daily described the trial as a long-running television soap opera and said the verdict left many questions about the murder unanswered.

The newspaper made the trial verdict its main foreign story, written by a correspondent in New York, with pictures of a delighted Simpson and weeping relatives of one of the victims.

In other Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan there was limited reaction, partly because the news came too late for many morning newspapers but also because there was little interest.

In Japan he was not particularly well known compared with other American stars. Japanese newspaper editors said.

"Oh, he's been acquitted," asked one Seoul secretary in surprise. "I don't think people here really cared about the case, except at first, when we learned that he had been married to a white woman. That was shocking to us."

Haynes on a new mission

LONDON, Oct 4: Former West Indies opening batsman Desmond Haynes has been appointed Sussex's first-team coach on a three-year contract, reports Reuters.

The 39-year-old Barbadian, who played in 116 Tests, will take up his new position with the English county before the start of next season.

Haynes replaces former England left-arm spinner Norman Gifford, who resigned in July, and has the task of reviving Sussex's fortunes after nine seasons without winning a trophy.

Gazza sidelined

GLASGOW, Oct 4: Paul Gascoigne the injury plagued English midfielder looks set to miss England's friendly in Norway next Wednesday after pulling a thigh muscle in Rangers 3-2 league win over Motherwell here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Gascoigne's recent performances, in Europe last week and in the old firm Derby last weekend, have suggested that he had regained all his former skill and fitness after an unhappy stay with Italian League team Lazio.

Fox's Spurs debut Oct 14

LONDON, Oct 4: Winger Ruel Fox's 4.2 million pound (6.68 million dollars) move from Newcastle to Tottenham Hotspur was given the stamp of approval by the English Premier League today, reports Reuters.

"Ruel is just what we need," said Tottenham manager Gerry Francis, whose London side lie ninth in the league.

Fox, 27, is expected to make his Tottenham debut at home to Nottingham Forest on October 14.

Gymnastics goes for Grand Prix

SABAE, Japan, Oct 4: The world's top gymnasts may follow in the footsteps of wealthy athletic and tennis stars with the creation of what could lead to a prize-carrying Grand Prix circuit, officials said today, reports AFP.

Slovakia's gymnastics federation said at the World Championships here it would host the world's first major tournament of head-to-head playoffs among star gymnasts next year, carrying total prize money of 50,000 marks (35,000 dollars).

"It will be held annually and it may develop into a series of similar events like in athletics and tennis Grand Prix in 1997 or 1998," said Andrej Bucko, director of the Slovak tournament dubbed the Kosice Cup Open.

The first event will be held in the Slovak city of Kosice a few weeks before the next World Championships in San Juan in mid-April, he said.

The format was successfully tested in logic's 12 top male gymnasts taking part, Bucko said.

The first tournament, sanctioned by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), will invited eight male and eight female gymnasts to compete in knockout tournaments on that apparatus.

Flamengo fire on three cylinders

UBERLANDIA, Brazil, Oct 4: With their "three tenors" in tune, Flamengo beat Velez Sarsfield of Argentina 3-0 Tuesday night in a first-round, second leg Supercopa soccer tournament game, reports AP.

The loss eliminated defending world club champions Velez who dropped the first leg of the series 3-2 in Buenos Aires.

Although the Argentines dominated much of the game, they could not stop Flamengo's frontline of Romario, Edmundo and Savio dubbed "the three tenors."

Flamengo took a 1-0 lead in the fifth minute when Savio weaved in from the left and passed to Romario. Argentine defender Pellegrino deflected the ball into his own net.

In the 60th minute Romario and Edmundo traded passes from midfield, and Edmundo put the ball through the legs of Paraguayan goalie Chulaver.

Savio was replaced in the 75th minute by Rodrigo, who scored the winning goal with seconds left in the first-leg game. Just two minutes later, Rodrigo made the play of the night when he baffled his defender with a dribble and found Romario in front of the net for the tap in.

With a minute left, Argentine defender Zandonza punched Edmundo and both benches emptied. Police were called in to break up the fight on field, and the referee ended the game without expelling any players.

Flamengo pay Nacional of Uruguay in the second round.

Rosset advances

TOULOUSE, France, Oct 4: Second seeded Marc Rosset of Switzerland advanced to the second round of the Toulouse Open tennis tournament Tuesday but Russian Davis Cup hero Andrei Chesnokov lost, reports AP.

Rosset beat Belgian Dirk Norman, 6-3, 7-6 (7-4) in the first round. Chesnokov, who rallied to beat German Michael Stich after saving nine match points in the deciding match of the Davis Cup semifinal, bowed to Frenchman Arnaud Boetsch, 6-3, 6-4.

Three other French players won. Nicolas Escude defeated fifth seeded Bernd Karbacher of Germany 7-5 (7-3), 6-2; Rodolphe Gilbert beat compatriot Olivier Delaire, 6-3, 0-6, 7-6 (7-4) and Fabrice Santoro toppled another Frenchman Lionel Barthez 6-4, 6-3.

Top-seeded Jim Courier plays his first round match Wednesday.

Sports awards

Monthly "Mohammedan", a sports magazine, selected nine sports personalities for its sports award '95 in recognition of their contributions in the field of sports, reports UNB.

The personalities are: Siddiqur Rahman (sports organiser), Alauddin Khan (football), Brojen Das (swimming), Niaz Morshed (chess), late Shah Alam (athletics), late Main Uddin Mahmud (cricket), Abdul Hamid (sports commentator), Nasir Ahmed (hockey) and Atiqur Rahman (shooting).

The award will be distributed at a reception in December this year.

Army boxing

GHATAIL, Tangail, Oct 4: Four bouts of different weight categories of the annual boxing championship of the Bangladesh Army were finalised at the Ghatail Cantonment here today, an ISPR press release said, reports BSS.

## ACOG's animal affliction

ATLANTA, Oct 4: A coalition of animal rights groups asked organisers of the 1996 Olympics on Tuesday not to release live birds during the opening ceremonies at next summer's Games, reports Reuters.

In a petition submitted to the organising committee, about 200 groups led by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), said the birds could be harmed if they are released after the lighting of the Olympic flame in July.

Animal rights activists say 2,000 pigeons will be released during the opening ceremonies. But Laurie Olsen, a spokeswoman for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), said the ceremony programme has not even been put together yet.

"When we do have one you can be assured that our plan will take into account the concerns of PETA and other groups," she said.

The pigeons are mandated by International Olympic Committee (IOC). But the use of live birds has concerned animal rights activists since the Seoul Olympics in 1988, when some birds apparently perched on the cauldron and were burned to death when the Olympic flame was lit.

ACOG could adopt an alternative to live animals such as the pigeon-shaped balloons released at the start of the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, where the temperature was judged to be too cold for real birds.

But Olsen said if live birds are used, they will be trained homing pigeons that can be accounted for afterwards.

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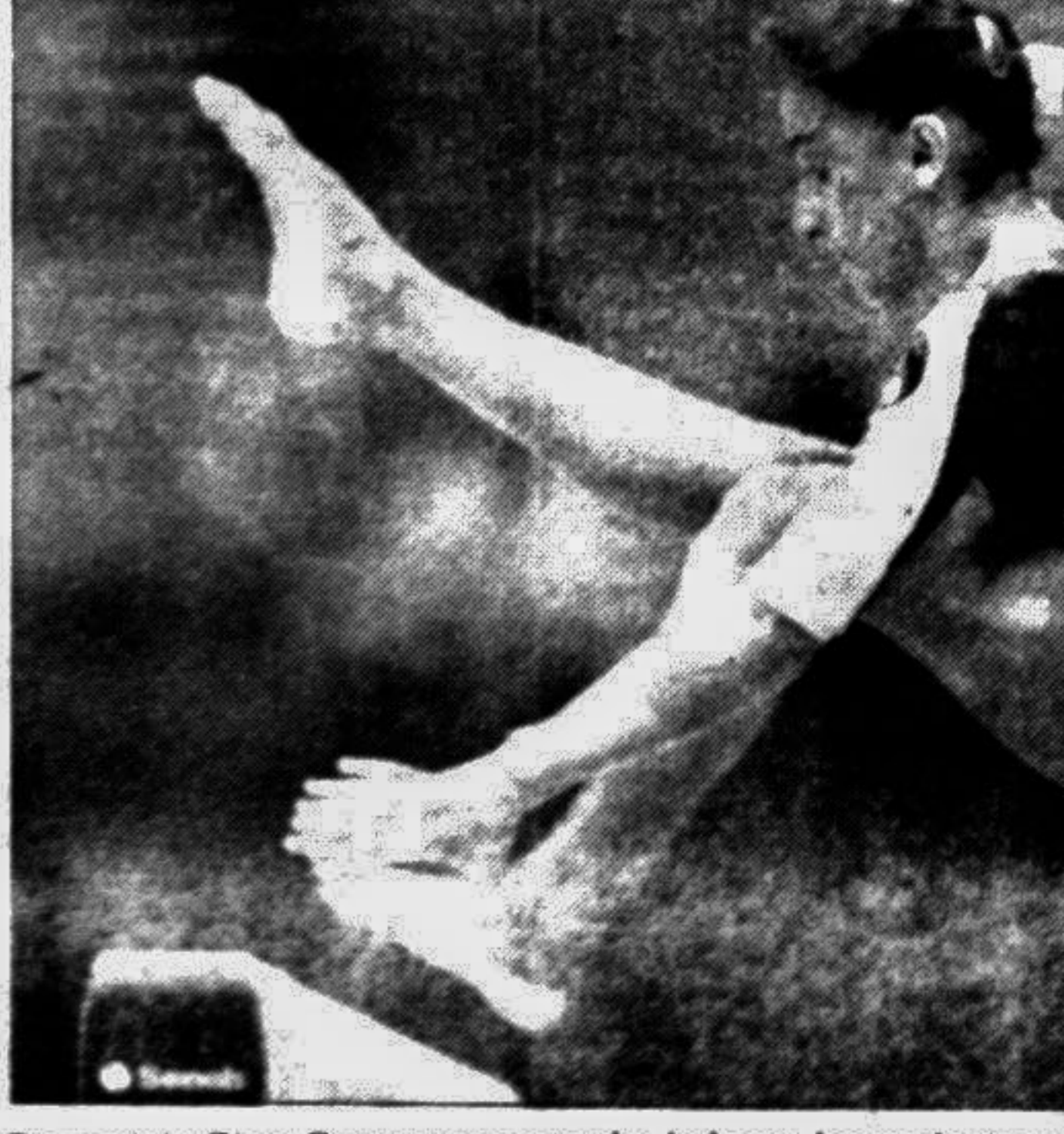
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Romania's Gina Gogean mounts the balance beam during the women's team compulsory event at the 1995 World Gymnastics Championships in Sabae, Japan on October 3. — AFP/UNB photo