



Marcel Desailly (L) of AC Milan throws himself to the ground after being tackled by a Juventus defender during their Italian First Division league match in Milan on Oct 15. Milan beat Juventus 2-1. — AFP/UNB photo

Madras ready to roll

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: About 2000 athletes from the seven SAARC member countries are expected to participate in the seventh South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, scheduled to be held in Madras from December 18 to 27, reports BSS.

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and host India have confirmed their participation in all the 14 events, disclosed the president of Indian Olympic Association (IOA) B Sivanthi Adityan at a press briefing here today.

The 10-day extravaganza will feature, among others, athletics, kabaddi, shooting, football, hockey, judo, swimming, tennis, table tennis, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling.

Adityan said most of the venues are in the final stages of completion and would be ready by the end of next month. He expressed satisfaction over the international standard of the sports infrastructures being built in compliance with the requirements laid down by various international sports federations.

An organising committee headed by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu J Jayalalitha has been formed. In all, 18 sub committees have been constituted to ensure smooth conduct of the games.

A games village is being developed on an area of 35 acres of land at Koyumbedu with 560 residential apartments at the centre, equipped with modern facilities.

Majoli shows magic again

FILDERSTADT, Germany, Oct 16: Croatian teenager Iva Majoli won her second Tour title in eight days when she beat Gabriela Sabatini in the final of the Filderstadt women's indoor tournament on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The 18-year-old Majoli, who upset Australian Open champion Mary Pierce to win her first title last Sunday at the European indoor tournament in Zurich, toppled third seed Sabatini 6-4, 7-6 in just over an hour and three quarters.

Seventh seen Majoli dictated the pace with deep drives that kept the Argentine scrambling behind the baseline.

"I have been working very hard for the past few months and now it is paying off," said Majoli, who had appeared tired during the tournament but kept coming back to win.

"I said to myself that I had one or two matches and I had to try to win," she said. "I am very happy."

Jubilant at the victory she raced across the court to embrace her father and brother.

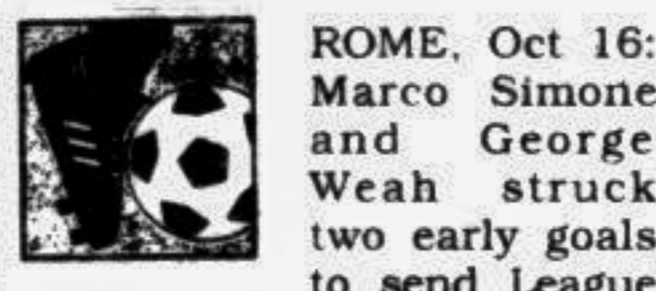
Sabatini, past victor at Filderstadt, said: "We both played solid tennis but she played better, at least at the decisive moments."

Majoli, who had beaten Pierce for the second time in six days on Friday, had just received her driving licence and was happy to learn the car on offer to the winner had an automatic transmission.

Courier skips Salem Open

BELJING, Oct 16: Former world number one Jim Courier has pulled out of the Salem Open in Beijing, which started today, leaving the way open for Michael Chang to win a second tournament in two weeks, reports AFP.

Milan in joie de vivre



ROME, Oct 16: Marco Simone and George Weah struck two early goals to send League leaders AC Milan on their way to a 2-1 win over title-holders Juventus in the top-of-the-table clash in the Italian First Division on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The result left Milan two points clear in the title race with 15 points from six matches, while Juventus dropped to fifth.

Parma moved up to second place with a 1-0 win over Udinese, thanks to a late goal by Alessandro Melli.

Lazio rose to third with a 2-0 win over Padova, level on points with Fiorentina, who ruined Napoli's five-match unbeaten run with a 2-0 away win. Fiorentina's goals were scored by Daniel Carnasciali and Massimo Orlando, both against the run of play.

"Milan showed they are the strongest team in the championship at this stage of the season," the club's owner and former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi said after his side's first win over Juventus at the San Siro in five years.

Despite having Roberto Baggio and Dejan Savicevic injured and Demitrio Albertini suspended, Milan overwhelmed Juventus with a display of aggressive, attacking football reminiscent of

the side that won three successive titles from 1992 to 1994.

A capacity 83,000 crowd had to wait just five minutes for Simone's opener, a sizzling free-kick from 25 metres out.

Seven minutes later Librarian striker Weah demonstrated how his arrival from Paris St Germain has revitalised Milan's attack this season as he played a neat one-two before sliding home a second goal.

"I hope this slap in the face will help us in the future," Juventus coach Marcello Lippi said on his side's first defeat of the season.

The only encouraging sign for Lippi ahead of Wednesday's European Cup Champions' League match with Glasgow Rangers was the form of Italy international Alessandro Del Piero.

The young striker rounded off an 81st-minute counter-attack with a clinical finish for his side's only goal and later floated a superb ball across the Milan goal which Sergio Porrini narrowly failed to convert into an under-served equaliser.

Parma coach Nevio Scala's inspired substitution of Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov by Melli was the key to his side's third successive victory.

Within five minutes of coming on, Melli had

outjumped the Udinese defence to head home the only goal of the match.

The nature of Parma's victory — both Stoichkov and Dino Baggio were denied goals by the woodwork — confirmed that after an indifferent start, Scala's side are championship contenders.

Inter's new English coach Roy Hodgson, still officially manager of the Swiss national team, made the short trip across the Italian border to watch his new side struggle to a 1-1 draw against Atlanta at Bergamo.

Hodgson, who will take over from interim team chief Luisito Suarez on Monday, watched from the stands as Inter demonstrated just why club president Massimo Moratti has appointed a manager renowned for his disciplinary style.

First, in the 53rd minute, striker Marco Delvecchio was shown the red card for retaliation, then, after the visitors took a fortunate lead through an own goal, they conceded an equaliser with five minutes remaining.

To add to the embarrassment of Moratti's expensive side, newly-promoted Vicenza, assembled with little money and just back in the top flight after a 16-year absence, moved two points ahead of them into seventh place with a 2-0 win over Bari.

Thai Farmers to the fore

HONG KONG, Oct 16: Thai Farmers' Bank began their quest for a hat-trick of Asian Club Championship titles by thrashing Valencia of the Maldives 6-0 at the weekend, reports AFP.

Thai Farmers, received a bye in the first round, but wasted no time in opening their account in the first leg of the second round in Suphan Buri, Thailand.

Right-back Sing Totavee gave them the lead in the 15th minute against the tiny Maldives club, who did well to beat Indian champions Mohun Bagan in the first round.

In the second half, the Thais added five more goals through midfielders Worrawoot Srimaka (2) and Sasom Pobprasert, central defender Sujja Sirikeat from the penalty spot and Sing again.

In other second round first leg matches, Persib of Indonesia beat Philippines' Pasay City 2-1 at home. Ilhwa Chunma of South Korea won 3-2 against Phang in Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia's Al Naar scored a narrow 1-0 victory over Elimay of Kazakhstan in Riyadh.

This year's championship is split into west and east Asia competitions. The top four clubs in each region will go through to a quarter final league and the top two from each region then go to the semifinals and final in December.

In east Asia, Japan's Verdy Kawasaki have already progressed to the quarter finals after their 9-1 demolition of Pakistan's Crescent Mills. The second-leg in Faisalabad was cancelled by the Asian

Al-Riad win

TRIPOLI, Lebanon, Oct 16: Al-Riad of Saudi Arabia beat Lebanon's Homenmen 2-0 in their Asian Cup Winners' Cup second round, first leg match on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Football Confederation because of security fears in Pakistan.

Verdy, Asian club champions in 1987 when known as Yomiri Nippon FC, look like being joined in the east Asia quarter finals by Thai Farmers, Ilhwa Chunma and either Apsay or Eprsb.

In Malaysia, Pahang took a 17th-minute lead against Korean champions Ilhwa through Azizul Kamaludin but the Seoul club fought back through Sin Tea-Yong and Lee Sang-Yoon.

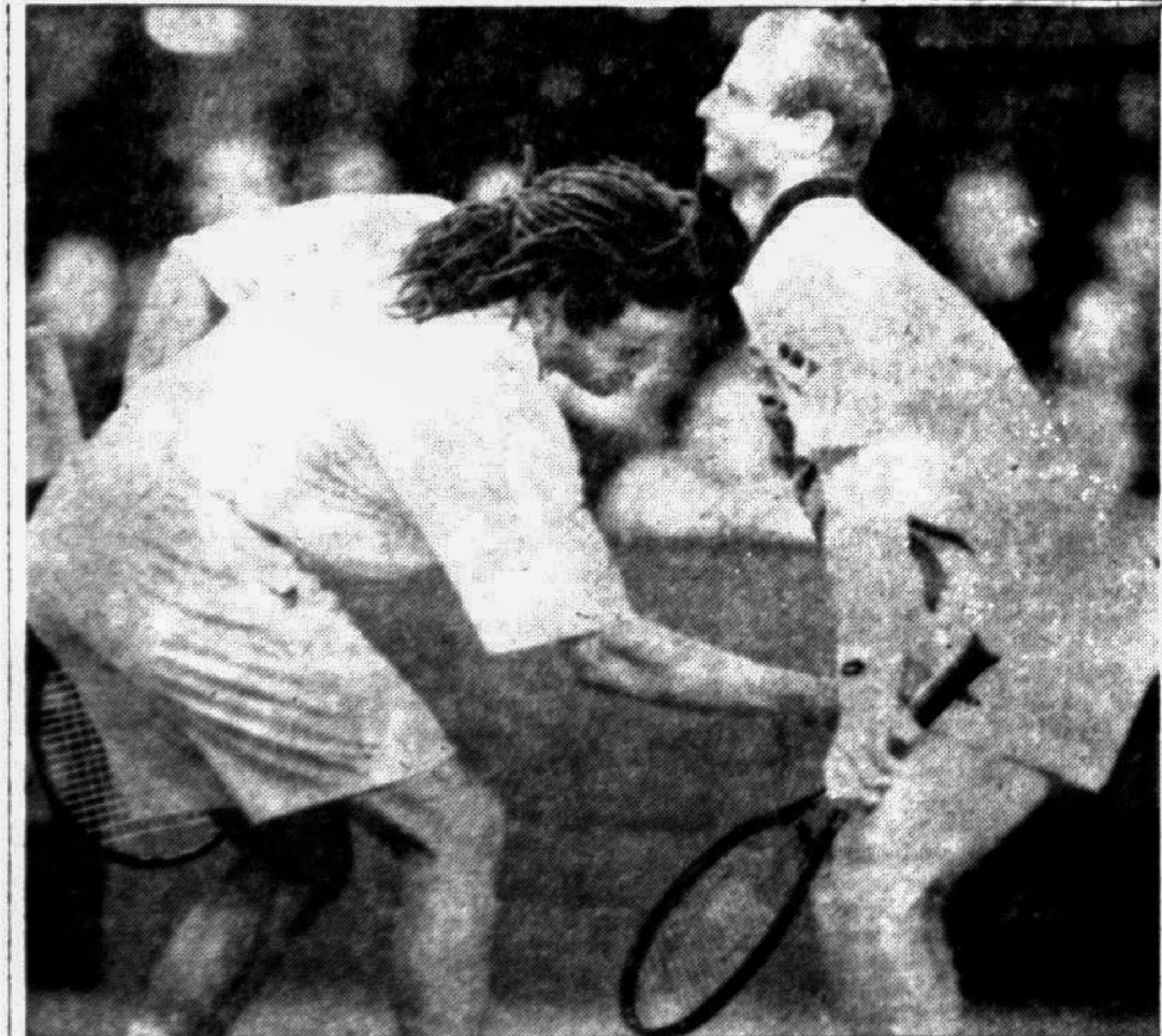
Azizul's second of the night two minutes into the second half made it 2-2 and Korea's player of the year 1994, Ko Jeong-Woon, produced the match-winner in the 52nd minute.

In Bandung, Indonesia, Pasay City went in front against Parsib in only the second minute with a goal from Yule Aversales. Parsib skipper Roobby Darwis equalised in the 32nd minute and scored the winner 20 minutes later.

In west Asia, Al Naar's match-winner against Ellmay came from Naser Al Fahad in the 21st minute.

In the Asian Cup Winners' Cup, a crowd of 20,000 at the Azadi Stadium, Teheran, saw Ali Asgar Nodir Roosta score the only goal of the second round first leg tie for Bahman against Kazakhstan visitors Vostok.

Rajpracha of Thailand held off Indonesia's Petrokimia Putra in a 5-4 thriller.



SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING: Veteran French star Yannich Noah grabs what he thought to be a tennis ball that got stuck in Austrian Thomas Muster's pocket during an exhibition match in Vienna on Oct 15. — AFP/UNB photo

Diego's first comeback goal

BUENOS AIRES, Oct 16: Diego Maradona scored his first goal in the Argentine Championship since 1981, and his first since making his comeback from a 15-month international ban for drug-use, on Sunday, reports AFP.

The 35-year-old, who wants to play in next year's under-23 Olympic tournament as one of Argentina's three over-age players, scored the only goal of the game from a 71st minute free-kick in Boca Juniors' match at Argentinos Juniors.

It was his first goal since scoring in Argentina's 4-0 win over Greece in the 1994 World Cup, where he later tested positive for ephedrine.

His last goal in Argentina was in 1981 when he played for Boca Juniors for a spell. He started his career with Argentinos Juniors.

Juninho arrives in London

LONDON, Oct 16: Brazilian soccer star Juninho flew into Britain today on his way to join his new club Middlesbrough, reports Reuter.

The diminutive midfielder, accompanied by his father Oswaldo, beamed with delight as he stepped off a plane at London's Heathrow Airport after a flight from Sao Paulo.

A private jet was waiting at Heathrow to take the 22-year-old Juninho north to Middlesbrough.

Manager Bryan Robson signed the 1.66-metre tall player from Sao Paulo earlier this month for 7.53 million dollars after days of negotiations with the Brazilian club.

Thousands of Middlesbrough fans and a 50-piece samba band are planning a welcome for Juninho on Tuesday at the English Premier League club's new Riverside stadium.

Juninho is expected to make his debut for his new club against Manchester United on October 28, once the paperwork connected with his move has been completed.

Real keep up the pace

MADRID, Oct 16: Real Madrid continued their recovery on Sunday, battling out a 2-0 win away to lowly Salamanca, despite having midfielder Luis Milla sent off a minute before halftime, reports Reuter.

Reigning champions Real are leaving behind their worst start to a season in living memory.

Chilean spearhead Ivan Zamorano shot them ahead after just 12 minutes, but they were reduced to 10 men when Milla was shown a second yellow card for a deliberate handball.

Salamanca pressed hard in the second half, but Emilio Amavisca wrapped up the three points for Real with a precise chip at minutes from the end.

The win lifted Real up to 11th position, 11 points behind leaders Atletico Madrid, who beat Deportivo Coruna 1-0 at home on Saturday.

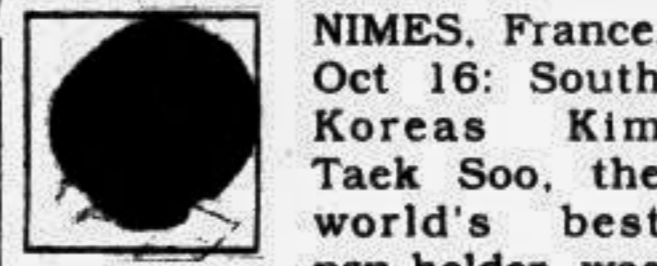
In second place, two points behind Atletico, come Barcelona, whose youngsters thrashed Athletic Bilbao 4-1, also on Saturday.

In third place are Espanol, who triumphed 3-0 away to Sevilla, provoking the sacking of local Portuguese coach Toni Olivera.



Kong Linghui of China (C) holds his world champion's trophy on the winners' podium in Nimes, France, on Oct 15. — AFP/UNB photo

Handshake with shakehand



NIMES, France, Oct 16: South Korea's Kim Taek Soo, the world's best pen-holder, was in no doubt the European shakehand grip was now more effective in the world of table tennis, reports AFP.

Kim, who reached the quarterfinals of the men's singles World Cup here, added: "If I could start my career again, I would use a shakehand grip."

The European grip, with fingers wrapped around the bat, evolved from the traditional Western tradition of shaking hands. Where as the pen-holder style was more natural for Asians — they gripped the bat as though they were using chopsticks or holding a pen.

Pen-holders won men's singles world titles from 1977 to 1987 — Japan's Mitsuru Kohno in 1977, Japan's Seiji Ono in 1979, China's Guo Yuehua in 1981 and 1983, and China's Jiang Jialiang in 1985 and 1987.

From 1989 to now, players with a Western grip have won the world title. The 1995 champion Kong Linghui

turned a new page in Chinese table tennis history as he won with a European grip.

Three of the first five editions of the World Cup were won by pen-holders — Guo Yuehua in 1980 and 1982, and Jiang Jialiang in 1984. But since then, only players with the European style have taken the World Cup title.

Kim, a bronze medalist for South Korea in the 1995 world men's team event, said it was not just coincidence pen-holders have dwindled since the late 80s.

Kim and China's world runner-up Liu Guoliang were the only pen-holders at the 16-strong, men's singles World Cup here this week.

"The pen-holder backhand is much weaker than a Western grip backhand," said 25-year-old world number four Kim. "Before fast glue came on the scene, it was more difficult to exploit the weaker pen-holder backhand."

"But when fast glue came to be used by nearly all the top players, it became easier to exploit."

Kim believed it was a deliberate decision by Chinese coaches to train more Western grip players.

The Olympic bronze medalist in men's doubles, also admitted if he had his time over again, he would use a Western grip.

"I would start with a shakehand grip because it's easier. The backhand and the block is more difficult for a pen-holder. I don't have those problems because I worked very hard at those shots."

Jean-Philippe Gattien of France, the 1993 world champion, said, Asian players and China in particular, have always had players in their squad with European grips.

Gattien said: "there are just more of them now it's a natural progression as they realise the benefits to their backhand."

Commonwealth and North American champion Johnny Haung of Canada agreed with Kim the faster game has sounded a death knell for pen-holders.

"In the past, pen-holders who were fast around the court could play forehands all the time. You cannot do that these days and everybody needs a good backhand," Huang said.

Opel turns back on Graf



BONN, Oct 16: Tennis star Steffi Graf has lost an annual 1 million dollars sponsorship contract, one of the biggest in German sport, after a much-publicised investigation into her tax affairs, her sponsor said today, reports Reuter.

German car company Adam Opel, which has backed Graf for 10 years, announced it would not be renewing the deal with the Wimbledon champion at the end of the year.

"Adam Opel states that, in the given situation, it has decided not to extend the contract with Steffi Graf which expires at the end of 1995," the company, a subsidiary of

the US giant General Motors, said in a brief statement.

"Opel supervisory board



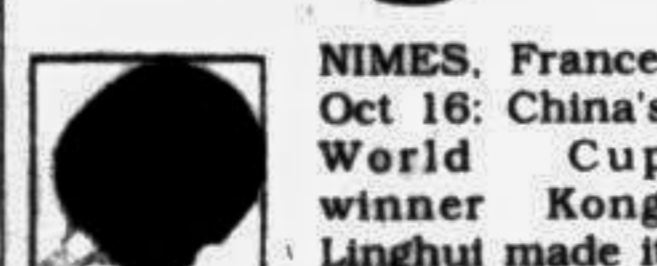
STEFFI GRAF

member and GM Europe vice president Hans Wilhelm Gaeb thanked Steffi Graf on behalf of the company for the many years of good partnership and emphasised that the company's decision in no way expresses any doubts concerning her personal integrity."

Graf, whose father Peter was jailed in August to stop him fleeing or concealing evidence that might support accusations he and his daughter evaded taxes, is estimated to earn around 1.5 million marks (1.06 million dollars) per year from the deal.

Opel officials hinted last week that the 26-year-old multi-millionaire was in danger of losing the deal because of problems surrounding her management team.

Tough time awaits Kong



NIMES, France, Oct 16: China's World Cup winner Kong Linghui made it clear he would have a tougher time at next year's Olympics than he had in winning the World Championships on home soil in May, reports AFP.

Kong, who won the men's singles World Cup here on Sunday to add to the world title he won in Tianjin, said, "the Chinese spectators do an incredible amount for the players. Even in China I did not expect to win, but the spectators really got behind us."

"It will be much tougher for the Chinese to win in Atlanta."

Should Kong, who beat Germany's 1992 European champion Jorg Roskopf 18-12, 24-22, 22-20, 21-14 to earn the 33,000 top prize here, win in Atlanta, Georgia, he would complete an unprecedented treble.

He would become the holder of the world, Olympic and World Cup titles at the same time.

While Kong celebrated, world number six Roskopf, who won the European Masters Cup in Germany last month, had to be content with the 17,000-dollar runners-up prize.

Kong, quick on his feet and with a powerful righthanded attacking game, showed tenacity in tight situations throughout the match.

The 1994 Asian champion could quite easily have lost 3-0, a fact not overlooked by Roskopf after the match.

"I had a good chance to win the match 3-0, so I'm not very happy at the moment. But when I wake up tomorrow morning, I think I

will be very happy with my second place," Roskopf said.

Lefthander Roskopf, 26, never trailed in the first game.

Roskopf raced to an 18-12 lead and converted the game 21-18 when Kong overhit a forehand.

Roskopf, however, known for a lightning fast backhand, good physical fitness and steady nerves, missed a chance to grab an invaluable 2-0 lead.

European Masters Cup champion Roskopf led 21-20 and 22-21, but on each

Bomb explosion kills six in Ukraine

KIEV, Oct 16: A bomb exploded in a Ukraine stadium at the start of a soccer game, killing the president of one of the country's top clubs and five others people in the eastern city of Donetsk, officials said today, reports Reuter.

Yuri Kolotsei, vice-president of Shaktyor Donetsk Club, said the bomb exploded four minutes into the match on Sunday afternoon, killing club president Alexander Bragin as he walked in to a stand for honoured guests. Police said they believed the blast was detonated by remote control.

The match against Tavria Simferopol was immediately abandoned and the 8,000 spectators evacuated from the stadium.

Bragin, head of Donetsk Shaktyor for the past 18 months, was also chairman of Luxe, one of the city's largest commercial firms. He had a controversial image — he was shot and injured by unknown assailants 18 months ago.

occasion he was let down by his forehand as he netted twice.

Yet another forehand error by Roskopf on the receive of service brought Kong the game 24-22 to level at 1-1.

Disaster struck Roskopf in the third game as his forehand again let him down. Roskopf led 20-14, but then lost eight consecutive points — five from forehand errors, two from backhand errors and a Kong forehand winner — to lose the set 22-20.

Roskopf's also squandered the advantage of five consecutive services from his 20-15 lead.

Roskopf's head dropped in the fourth set. A missed forehand on Kong's first match point brought the Chinese the set at 21-14 for a 3-1 win in 48 minutes.

China have now won the title nine times in the 16-year history of this 16-man invitation event — the most prestigious annual tournament in the sport as the World Championships are every two years and the Olympics are every four years.

Guo Yuehua won in 1980 and 1982, Jiang Jialiang won in 1984, Chen Xinhua, who now plays for England, won for China in 1985, Chen Longcan won a year later, and Teng Yi won in 1987.

Then Ma Wenge won in both 1989 and 1992.

China's Liu Guoliang earlier on Sunday took third place.

Liu, the world runner-up, beat France's defending champion Jean-Philippe Gattien 22-20, 17-21, 21-18, 17-21, 21-18, to earn 13,000 dollars and a place on the podium. Gattien, the 1993 world champion, earned 9,000 dollars.