

Steffi survives a scare



BONN, Oct 18: Tennis star Steffi Graf is not in immediate danger of losing more her lucrative sponsorship deals because of a tax scandal but legal battles around the case could go on for a decade, her lawyer said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

backers. "We advertise with her as a tennis player and nothing has changed with that," said a spokesman for German-based sportswear firm Adidas which has worked with Graf since 1984.

Graf, 26, earns about two million marks (1.4 million dollars) annually from the Adidas deal.



STEFFI GRAF

"There are no plans to split with her. In 1994 we decided to work with Steffi Graf not only as a tennis player but also as a human being," said a spokesman for Graf's racket supplier Wilson. Graf makes about one million marks (700,000 dollars) from the deal.

While Opel said it had decided not to renew their contract after 10 years because of concern about the way the player's money was managed, executive Hans Wilhelm Gaeb stressed that

the firm believed in Graf's innocence in the affair.

Elda Gibbs, the firm for which Graf does deodorant commercials for about 1.5 million marks (one million dollars) a year, said it saw Graf as a victim until any guilt was proved. "There's no question of parting company," a spokesman said.

The affair has been front-page news in Germany since it was announced in July that the Graf family homes in Germany had been raided by tax investigators.

Graf, who was grilled by prosecutors for the second time last week, told reporters in Britain where she is playing a tournament, German media coverage of the scandal was a burden.

"There's no way of escaping it," she said. "I'm happy to get away. Tennis right now gives me the break of not having constantly to talk to lawyers. Tennis is what I'm living for right now, nothing else."

The case was complicated further on Tuesday when Danckert claimed that Graf had not signed her 1993 tax return personally and a signature had been produced using an autograph machine. It is not clear whether this would help or hinder her case but it is possible a false signature might invalidate the document.

Court officials also said on Tuesday that Graf's father had withdrawn a final appeal against being held in custody while public prosecutors investigated the case. He had failed to win previous appeals.

Cameroon's belated wisdom

YAOUNDE, Oct 18: Cameroon's sports minister has called a special congress of the national soccer federation to resolve a dispute threatening to exclude the "Indomitable Lions" from international competitions — starting with the 1996 African Nations' Cup, reports Reuter.

Joseph Marie Bipoun said the congress would be held on October 30 and would elect a new Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT) executive.

The International Football Federation (FIFA), in a letter dated October 3, had threatened Cameroon with exclusion from all international competitions if such a congress were not held by October 31.

The dispute is over the minister's decision to sack FECAFOOT's old executive in June. Bipoun accused the former executive of bad management in connection with an affair involving missing funds.

FIFA argued that he did not have the power to sack the executive and should reinstate him, it also judged that the replacement did not have the power to sign Cameroon up for the 1998 World Cup.

The minister rejected a call from FIFA that the reinstated executive call the special congress. Under FECAFOOT rules, he too has the power to call a special congress.

Cameroon has already qualified for the finals of the African Nations' Cup in South Africa early next year.



Liverpool's Mark Wright (R) guards the ball from Broendby IF's Peter Moeller during their UEFA Cup second round, first leg clash in Broendby, Denmark on October 17. — AFP/UNB photo

Eindhoven's late reprisal



LONDON, Oct 18: Former European champions PSV Eindhoven, involved in an eight-goal thriller at Leeds United, AC Milan, Bayern Munich and Nottingham Forest all won away in the first leg of their UEFA Cup second round ties on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Belgian international Luc Nilis scored twice in the last seven minutes to give PSV, UEFA Cup winners in 1978, a 5-3 victory over Leeds after the English side had fought back to 3-3 from 3-1 down at the Break.

Rene Eljerkamp, Marciano Vink and Wim Jonk, who volleyed home after working a neat free kick routine with Nilis, scored for the Dutch team after Leeds had opened the scoring in the sixth minute through Welsh international Gary Speed.

Former England midfielder Carlton Palmer made it 3-2 in the 48th minute with a fierce close-range drive from a cross from the left by Ghanaian Tony Yeboah, a prolific scorer for Leeds this season but guilty of a string of misses in this match.

Captain Gary McAllister appeared to have saved the

tie for Leeds with a brilliant equaliser from outside the box in the 72nd minute but Leeds now have a mountain to climb when they travel to the Netherlands for the second leg on October 31.

Leeds' hapless goalkeeper John Lukic has let in eight goals in his last two games. His side lost 3-0 to Arsenal in the Premier League on Saturday — Lukic's 400th game for the club.

But Leeds manager Howard Wilkinson was defiant in defeat.

"I believe we can win the second leg. Bad defending and lack of concentration has put them into a position like us when we came back from Monaco — they may think they have won the tie," he said.

"Against Monaco here they got an early goal and John Lukic kept us in the competition that night."

In the first round Leeds beat Monaco 3-0 away then lost the home leg 1-0.

Striker Marco Simone ran home a George Weah back heel 10 minutes from time to give Milan a 1-0 win at Strasbourg.

Germany captain Juergen Klinsmann scored twice, once in each half, as Bayern

beat Raith Rovers 2-0 in Scotland — a result that should see them comfortably through to the next round.

Midfielder, Steve Stone, who made his England debut last week, scored after 23 minutes to give Forest a 1-0 win over Auxerre of France.

Forest supporters broke a cafe window, injuring several people, before the match. Police used tear gas to disperse the fans.

Liverpool, also former European champions and twice UEFA Cup winners in the 1970s, drew 0-0 away to Brondby of Denmark.

There were home victories for two other former winners of Europe's senior trophy, Barcelona and Benfica, who make up a strong field in the UEFA Cup.

Romanian midfielder Nica Panduru struck 12 minutes from time to give the Portuguese side a 1-0 win over Roda JC Kerkrade of the Netherlands.

Bosnian striker Meho Kodro scored twice in Barcelona's 3-0 victory over Vitoria Guimaraes of Portugal, while Lugano, the Swiss side who upset former European Champions Internazionale of Milan in the first round, fell 2-1 at home to Slavia Prague.

UEFA chief cautions EU

STOCKHOLM, Oct 18: The European Union could kill international football if it bans the current transfer system and restrictions on the number of foreign players clubs are allowed, European Football Union (UEFA) president Lennart Johansson says, reports AFP.

Johansson warned the European Union in an open letter to the Svenska Dagbladet newspaper against taking a decision which will only benefit club football.

The European Court of Justice's advocate general Carl Otto Lenz last month unequivocally concluded in his report into the case of Jean-Marc Bosman that both practices violate the treaty of Rome.

Lenz said Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome prohibited clubs from demanding transfer fees for players at the end of their contract and from limiting the number of foreign players per club to three.

A definitive judgement in line with the recommendation of the advocate general is expected to come at the end of the year.

UEFA consider the nationality clause, restricting the number of foreigners per club, protects national teams and Johansson said it would be unfortunate if the 15 EU nations were forced to follow different rules to the other 178 football countries.

Bosman, a 31-year-old Belgian, has waged a five-year legal battle against soccer's bureaucrats after his career was effectively ended by the transfer system in 1990.

Leconte's Grand Slam adieu

HONG KONG, Oct 18: Veteran Frenchman Henri Leconte said here Tuesday that next year's French Open will be his 15th and last shot at a Grand Slam title, reports AFP.

The 32-year-old Leconte, who reached the final at Roland Garros in 1988, said he still enjoyed his tennis but age was catching up with him.

Leconte was beaten 6-3, 6-4 by top seed Goran Ivanisevic in the opening round-robin matches of the Marlboro Hong Kong Championships here Tuesday.

Next year's French Open will be my 15th and last one," he said. "I don't play the other Grand Slam events now, but I want to have one more try at the French Open."

"I'll be 33 next year and in two years time I want to play in the over 35 senior circuit."

His world ranking soared to as high as five in September 1988, but one of his best achievements was helping France to the Davis Cup title over the United States in 1991.

Pabna DSA AGM tomorrow

Sports Reporter

The annual general meeting of Pabna District Sports Association will be held tomorrow afternoon at the local stadium office, says a press release.

Deputy Commissioner Abu Ishaq, the president of the association will preside over the meeting while Anjan Chowdhury, the general secretary will present his year ending report, the press release added.

Women at a cross-roads

NEW YORK, Oct 18: Women have become the new target audience for shoe and sports clothing manufacturers, who hope to increase profits with sales pitches aimed at the growing number of global recreational female competitors, reports AFP.

"There's no question sales of women's athletic shoes are growing at a much faster rate than men's," said John Horan, whose sporting goods intelligence industry magazine follows such purchases.

Women spent 5.4 billion dollars last year on sports footwear, passing men's spending for the first time according to industry research, and the gap of 200,000 dollars from 1994 is expected to reach one billion dollars this year.

"There is no question this is a cross-roads for women's sports," said Donna Lopiano, executive director of the women's sports foundation. "We haven't begun to see the influx of resources you are going to see in the next five years."

"Sporting goods manufacturers and companies marketing to active women have

embraced female sports figures as a way to get the message across."

Nike and Reebok each serve about 25 per cent of the women's sport footwear market, but women had been a minor target.

Nike named for a Greek Goddess, spent only about 20.7 million dollars of a 138 million-dollar ad budget on the women's market, while Reebok targeted women with 42 million dollars of its 105 million-dollar ad budget.

Such deals helped make global stars out of America's Michael Jordan, Shaquille O'Neal, Michael Chang and Emmitt Smith.

Now the same treatment could be coming for such women as tennis player Venus Williams, hockey goaltender Manon Rheume and US basketball star Rebecca Lobo.

"This is not a political move on the party of the shoe companies," Lopiano said. "They see economic advantages to marketing to women."

"Either women are going to follow in the footsteps of men, right now, or they are going to plot their own courses," Lopiano said.

Those courses have Lobo, a member of the 1996 US Olympic women's basketball team, pondering offers from three fledgling US women's hoop leagues. Those who fail to sign her will probably die.

Lobo already has a rich shoe deal with Reebok, as do Williams, Rheume, volleyball's Liz Masakyan and tennis star Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario.

Nike counters with beach volleyball star and model Gabrielle Reece and will add US women's basketball Olympians Dawn Staley, Lisa Leslie and Cheryl Swoopes, "air swoopes" shoes are already on sale.

The marketing machine helping fuel the women's basketball players is that of the National Basketball Association, which has redesigned and promoted the US Women's Olympic uniforms to try and boost sales to "dream team" levels.

The first, three million dollars will defray costs of fielding the US women's Olympic team. That includes hosting teams from South Korea and Ukraine for 12-day stays this month to provide international tune-ups before the Atlanta Games.

Football on poverty

GENEVA, Oct 18: International soccer stars have joined the United Nations in the war on poverty by mounting an exhibition of footballs from the world's leading teams, reports AFP.

A total of 122 national selections — including those which took part in the 1994 World Cup in the United States — have provided signed footballs for the display here, organised in conjunction with the UN Programme for Development (UNDP).

The exhibition, tagged "One goal, human development" opened Sunday and lasts until the end of the month.

It coincides with Tuesday's day against poverty, as well as this weekend's celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The UNDP said more than one person in five lives in poverty, one out of 10 suffers from malnutrition, 1.3 billion people have no access to drinking water, 900 million adults cannot read or write and every three minutes a child dies from starvation or lack of healthcare.

The football display has already been in New York, London, the Netherlands, Brussels and Madrid. After Geneva, it will move to Berlin, Portugal, Paris and Rome.

The UNDP's mission is to assist developing countries and those in transition to a market economy, which comprises 175 nations.

Sino soccer club fined

BEIJING, Oct 18: The Chinese Soccer Association has fined a local club 10,000 yuan (1,200 dollars) and closed its ground for two games after fans burst on to the pitch and tried to attack the referee, the People's Daily said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The incident happened on Saturday at the ground of the Laifu Club in the southern province of Hunan when the local team was playing a railway team, the paper said.

In the 81st minute, local fans invaded the pitch and tried to attack the referee who was only saved by the players.

The match was abandoned and as the players of the railway side left the ground they were pelted with bottles and rubbish, the paper said.

The association declared the game null and void and will order it to be replayed at a different venue.

It ordered the Laifu ground to be closed for two games and warned the club that if it did not improve public order it would lose its right to take part in the league.

Since the establishment of a professional league in 1994, soccer has boomed as a spectator sport in China with isolated incidents of hooliganism. Laifu competes in a lower division of the league.

Aussies deny Pak plea



ISLAMABAD, Oct 18: Australia has turned down a Pakistani request to send two Test players for cross examination over bribery charges against former skipper Salim Malik, reports AFP.

It was "neither necessary nor appropriate" for the Australian players to go to Pakistan to face the enquiry committee. Australian Cricket Board chief executive, George Halbish, said in a message reported by the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP).

The Pakistan Cricket Board last month set up a committee headed by retired Justice Fakharuddin G Ebrahim to investigate charges by Australian bowlers, Shane

Warne and Tim May, that Malik offered them money to throw two Test matches during an Australian tour of Pakistan 18 months ago.

Pakistan won the three match series 1-0.

The committee has heard from Malik, who has denied the charges. The former skipper has been dropped from team pending the committee's report.

Halbish said the ACB would welcome Ebrahim in Australia where the players would be available for interview, a Pakistani board spokesman told APP.

However, he said it seemed the two bowlers did not want to appear before the committee "to prove the veracity of these wild accusations."

By rejecting the request,

the ACB had not fulfilled the basic principle of law that accused must have the opportunity to cross examine his accusers, he added.

He also criticised the "mysterious method" the ACB chose to make the accusations public five months after the alleged bribe was offered. Pakistan has already objected at the International Cricket Council's decision to look into an Australian complaint, the spokesman said.

He hoped the probe committee would complete its task "swiftly". The PCB council will meet in a few days to finalise the squad for Pakistan's forthcoming tour of Australia and New Zealand.

He did not say whether Malik would join the party if cleared by the committee.



Richard Krajicek plays a back hand return while his partner Stefan Edberg looks on during their doubles encounter against the South Korean duo of Kim Nam-Hoon and Shin Han-Cheol in the first round of the Marlboro Hong Kong championships on October 17. The Korean's were outplayed 1-6, 6-7 (0-7). — AFP/UNB photo

FIFA's top fifty



ZURICH, Oct 18: World champions Brazil maintained their lead in the latest rankings issued by FIFA, world soccer's governing body, on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Leading rankings (1994 final placings in brackets):

COUNTRY	POINTS
1. Brazil	(1) 68.19
2. Spain	(2) 60.53
3. Germany	(5) 60.50
4. Norway	(8) 58.46
5. Russia	(13) 57.67
6. Italy	(4) 57.51
7. Argentina	(10) 57.21
8. Denmark	(14) 57.12
9. Switzerland	(7) 56.29
10. Mexico	(15) 55.61
11. Bulgaria	(16) 55.37
12. France	(19) 55.03
13. Sweden	(3) 54.80
14. Netherlands	(6) 53.74
15. Equal Colombia	(17) 53.60
15. Equal Romania	(11) 53.60
17. Portugal	(20) 53.02
18. Ireland	(9) 51.59
19. United States	(23) 50.92
20. Czech Republic	(34) 50.83
21. Egypt	(22) 48.93
22. England	(18) 48.36
23. Ghana	(26) 47.78
24. Uruguay	(37) 46.98
25. Tunisia	(30) 46.78
26. Scotland	(32) 46.66
27. Poland	(29) 46.07
28. Turkey	(48) 46.00
29. Belgium	(24) 45.82
30. Greece	(28) 45.72
31. Zambia	(21) 45.67
32. Ivory Coast	(25) 45.45
33. Slovakia	(43) 44.73
34. Japan	(36) 44.31
35. Nigeria	(12) 43.32
36. Morocco	(33) 42.40
37. Chile	(47) 42.26
38. Finland	(38) 42.07
39. Saudi Arabia	(27) 42.01
40. Austria	(49) 41.68
41. Cameroon	(31) 41.21
42. Israel	(42) 41.16
43. Lithuania	(59) 39.56
44. Iceland	(39) 39.45
45. Croatia	(62) 38.51
46. Northern Ireland	(45) 38.22
47. Senegal	(50) 37.98
48. South Korea	(35) 37.80
49. Mali	(52) 37.62
50. Bolivia	(44) 36.80

Ferguson behind bars

EDINBURGH, Scotland, Oct 18: Scotland and Everton striker Duncan Ferguson began serving a three-month jail sentence Wednesday for head-butting another player, reports AP.

Ferguson, 23, becomes the first international player in British soccer to be jailed for an on-field incident.

A three-judge panel rejected Ferguson's appeal and ruled that a jail sentence was the appropriate punishment.

"We have reached the view we would not be justified in interfering with the sentence," the appeals court ruled after a 55-minute hearing. "In our opinion, in all the circumstances, the sentence of three months' imprisonment was intended to be an effective punishment and a deterrent to others. It cannot be described as excessive."

Ferguson showed no obvious emotion when the decision was announced.



This photograph released by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) on Oct 17 shows the front design of what will be the gold, silver and bronze medals for the 1996 Games. The medals will be manufactured by the silver company Reed and Barton of Massachusetts. The back of the medals show a combination of the 1996 Olympic logo and a pictogram signifying an Olympic event. — AFP/UNB photo