

Waqar may join Akram on sidelines Pak-WA tour opener today



PERTH, Oct 27: With or without ace paceman Waqar Younis, Pakistan will have their hands full in the opening first-class clash of their Australian cricket tour.

Western Australia will provide a stern test for the tourists in the four-day match starting at the WACA ground here Saturday, reports AFP.

Now in a re-building stage after dominating Australian domestic cricket for so long, the Western warriors (as the marketing people like them to be known) are eager for early successes this season under newly-appointed coach Wayne Clark, a former Test fast bowler.

Pakistan appear certain to be without captain Wasim Akram and may also lose the services of Waqar Younis, the other half of the world's most feared new-ball attack.

Wasim has always intended to sit out this match to give sore muscles around his left bowling shoulder a chance to recover.

Waqar was keen to play in this game, but there are doubts about whether the team management will risk him after he strained his right hamstring in a festival match against an Australian Cricket Board Chairman's Eleven Thursday.

He spent a long time on the massage table at the ground before practice Friday -- and then made only a token appearance at the nets, bowling off a couple of paces.

A look at the grassless pitch did nothing to fuel his desire to play. The match threatens to be a nightmare for the pace bowlers.

The Pakistan line-up is

unlikely to be announced until Saturday morning, but it appears probable Aaqib Javed, Aamir Nazir and Ata-ur Rehman will have to share the pace duties.

Leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed, young off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq and left-arm slow bowler Aamir Sohail,

over the tourists Thursday.

Western Australia's attack lacks no bite. Pakistan batsmen are familiar with gangling left-armers Bruce Reid, who will be ably supported by pacemen Jo Angel (a five-wicket man on Thursday) and the left-handed Brendon Julian, who have both reached



Wasim and Waqar... the injury-prone duo.

who will be acting captain, will offer plenty of variety.

Pakistan's attack will be pitted against a capable batting line-up headed by Indian-born opener Mark Lavender and a former Test

trio — the left-handed Justin Langer, flamboyant Damien Martyn, the side's skipper, and hard-hitting Tom Moody, who captains English country side Worcestershire.

Lavender has been in excellent form, while Langer, with a stylish 85 off 111 balls, almost guided the Chairman's Eleven to victory

Test level.

TEAMS

PAKISTAN: Aamir Sohail (cap), Salim Elahi, Rameez Raja, Imzamm ul Haq, Basit Ali, Moin Khan, Rashid Latif, Mushtaq Ahmed, Saqlain Mushtaq, Waqar Younis, Aamir Nazir, Aaqib Javed, Ata-ur Rehman.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Damien Martyn (cap), Justin Langer (vice-capt), Jo Angel, Craig Coulson, Adam Gilchrist, Brad Hogg, Mike Hussey, Brendon Julian, Mark Lavender, Tom Moody, Brad Oldroyd, Bruce Reid.

Madras Test heading nowhere

MADRAS, Oct 27: The third day of the second Test between India and New Zealand was abandoned without a ball being bowled Friday, leaving the rain-hit match heading for a watery grave, reports AFP.

Despite bright sunshine, ground staff struggled to get the slippery outfield ready after three days of heavy rain. Umpires Srinivasan Venkatraghvan and K. T. Francis decided to abandon play for the day around lunch time.

Just 35.5 overs were bowled on Wednesday's opening day, in which India crawled to 54 for the loss of opener Ajay Jadeja. The second day's play was washed out.

With just two days remaining in the match and the weather office predicting more rain, the Test seems doomed.

India lead 1-0 in the three-match series, having won the opening encounter at Bangalore last week by eight wickets.

India were lucky to finish the Bangalore Test in under three days because a heavy downpour started three hours after the match ended and lashed the city for two days.

S Waugh in marauding mood

SYDNEY, Oct 27: Steve Waugh hammered a swift century for New South Wales on Thursday as Australia's top order batsmen turned up for the forthcoming three-Test series against Pakistan, reports Reuters.

Waugh smashed 16 boundaries on his way to a brilliant 107 as New South Wales amassed 363 for five on the first day of their Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania.

Australia captain and opener Mark Taylor made 53 and Mark Waugh scored 44 during the home side's onslaught as Australia's senior batsmen enjoyed some valuable practice before the first Test in Brisbane, starting on November 9.

Fringe Test batsman Michael Bevan enhanced his prospects of selection by hitting an unbeaten 63 against an impotent Tasmanian bowling attack at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

In Brisbane, Shield holders Queensland reached 252 for four in reply to South Australia's first innings 276 at the close of the second day at the Gabba.

Queensland number five Jimmy Maher remained unbeaten on 96, his second half-century in successive matches, to steer the home side within sight of winning two competition points for a first innings lead.

Resuming on 262 for seven, including a contribution of 130 from captain Jamie Siddons, South Australia lost their last three wickets for the addition of 14 runs in damp conditions.

Wang Junxia's redemption

BEIJING, OCT 27: World champion Wang Junxia salvaged some dignity on Thursday by winning China's Urban Games 10,000 metres, bouncing back from a shock 5,000 metres loss to a teen prodigy of her estranged coach Ma Junren.

Wang, whose 1994 mutiny broke up the once-formidable "Ma family army" of women distance runners named after coach Ma, fought off Yang Siju of Kunming to win in 31 minutes 38.07 seconds, the Xinhua news agency said today, reports Reuters.

Wang was not apologetic about the lacklustre time, early two minutes off her 1993 world record pace and slower than her 1995 best.

"The result is normal," the struggling 22-year-old superstar was quoted as saying after the race.

Thrilling a capacity crowd in central Nanjing, Wang and Yang led by turns until the final 1,200 metres when Wang unleashed her explosive finish to open a 10-second gap at the tape.

Yang's second-place time of 31:48.39 was still good enough to slash 11.82 seconds off the Asian youth record, Xinhua said.

Wang Junxia's victory in her trademark event delighted the crowd and salvaged some of the dignity lost on Tuesday when Jiang Bo, a 16-year-old disciple of controversial coach Ma, exploded past her to win the 5,000 metres final.

Tuesday's defeat dominated China's sports pages and rekindled debate over her shock late-1994 defection from the MA Family Army, which had taken women's track by storm in 1993 with Wang as its brightest star.



For the first time in the country's history four persons attained the Korean taekwon do black belts. They are: (from left) Khasru Parvez Rumi, JC Chinese, Samar Khan Adnan and the president of Bangladesh Tae Kwon Do Federation Mahmudul Islam Rana. The black belts were awarded by Master Reza Makvandi (Irani) (pictured centre).

— Star photo

Testing time for Andre



ESSEN, Germany, Oct 27: Andre Agassi's hopes of finishing the year at the top of men's tennis for the first time suffered a severe setback on Thursday when he crashed out of the Essen Open complaining of a chest injury, reports Reuters.

After a 4-6, 6-1, 6-1 defeat by compatriot Malivai Washington in the third round, the American said he would be unable to play at next week's Paris Open and faced a race against time to get fit for next month's World Championship.

American world number two Sampras, who reached the quarter-finals with a 6-2,

6-4 victory over Australian Mark Woodforde, now has a superb chance to take over the top world ranking at the Essen event and in Paris.

Agassi came to Essen with a slim lead over Sampras in the rankings ahead of a crucial few weeks of action on Europe's indoor courts which comes to a climax at the ATP World Championship in Frankfurt on November 13.

While Sampras bids to pick up the points necessary to clinch the top spot, Agassi faces two weeks of treatment on a strained chest muscle which he first hurt during the Davis Cup semifinal against Sweden last month.

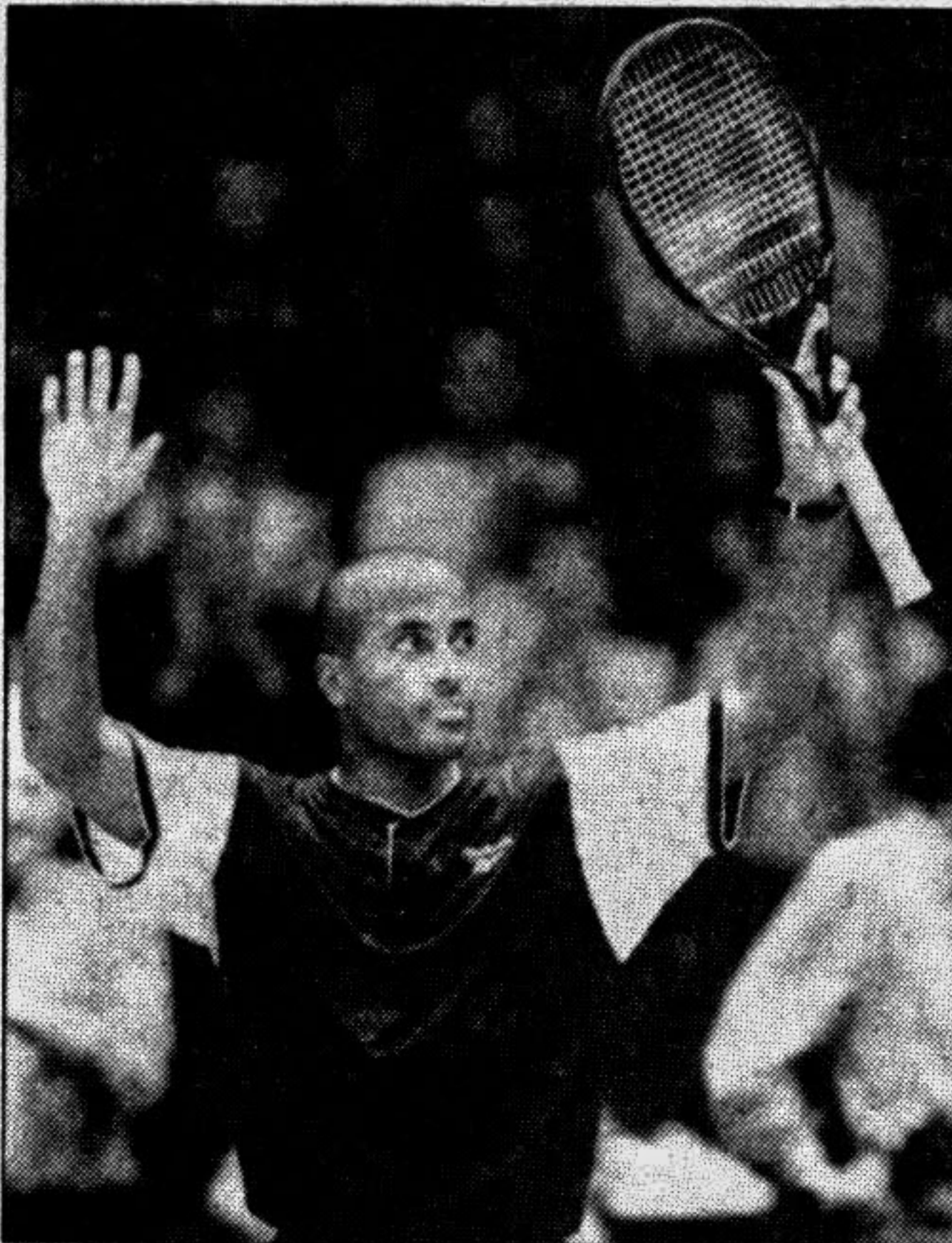
"I have got to get treated to get ready for Frankfurt," the 25-year-old from Las Vegas said. "I'm going home."

After taking the first set 6-4 Agassi seemed to be on his way to victory against Washington, ranked 54th in the world. But he lost his way in the second set and was involved in a bizarre scene in the sixth game.

Trailing 4-1, Agassi gave up a crucial break point on his own serve because he was annoyed that the Essen crowd had applauded a serve into the net.

After wasting his second serve with a limp-wristed shot, Agassi mocked their applause by tapping his racket in ironic gratitude.

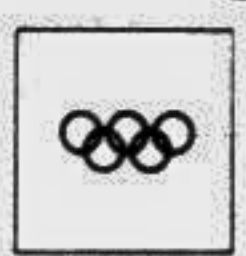
The 24-year-old Sampras, who was seeded to meet Agassi in Sunday's final, was hardly pushed by Woodforde, ranked 52nd in the world. After just 63 minutes the Australian struck a backhand into the net to hand the American his place in today's quarter-finals.



Malivai Washington of the United States acknowledges crowd's applause after defeating world No-1 Andre Agassi in the pre-quarterfinal clash of the Essen Open tournament in Germany on Oct 26. Washington won 4-6, 6-1, 6-1.

— AFP/UNB photo

Lighting up the Games



ATLANTA, Oct 27: Organisers and sponsors of the 1996 Atlanta Games unveiled an ambitious plan Thursday for recruiting 7,500 American citizens to carry the Olympic torch on its planned 15,000-mile odyssey across the United States, reports Reuters.

Under a scheme dubbed the community hero programme, the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) will select 5,500 ordinary citizens whose record of service to others exemplify the spirit of the Olympics.

Game sponsor Coca-Cola also announced plans to allow another 2,000 people to join the torch relay that is scheduled to begin next April and transport the Olympic flame through 42 states from Los Angeles to Atlanta.

As many as 10,000 torchbearers will participate in the relay, which ends on July 19 when the flame is carried into Atlanta's Olympic Stadium during the Games' opening ceremony.

"Community heroes are the foundation of America's greatness," said ACOG president Billy Payne.

"The men and women, with their diverse backgrounds, are the catalysts of the programmes and institutions that contribute so much to the future of our communities."

The torch, which will arrive in Los Angeles from Greece, is expected to be carried across the country by a variety of modes ranging from foot and horseback to train and wheelchair.

The ACOG programme, open to anyone 12 or older

on April 27, allows people to nominate themselves or others for outstanding volunteer work, service as a community leader or role model and other extraordinary accomplishments.

A network of committees set up by the united way will judge application forms that require, among other things, a 100-word essay about the qualities of community heroism.

Coca-Cola president M Douglas Ivester said his company hopes to recruit another 2,000 citizens for the relay through a contest to be unveiled next January.

The soft-drink giant also will select 500 torchbearers from overseas.

In addition, 1,000 Olympians will be recruited as torchbearers by the US Olympic Committee.

Tyson eager to be tested



LOS ANGELES, Oct 27: Former champ Mike Tyson, fresh from a first-round battering of obscure challenger Peter McNeeley, does not mind critics saying there are no more good heavyweights — he thinks he is better than all of them anyway, reports Reuters.

"I don't see it (the heavyweight division) as being in a bad state. You people have just been spoiled seeing me fight so long," he told a news conference on Tuesday alongside Buster Mathis Jr, his next opponent on the way back to a contest for the world title he lost more than five years ago.

Tyson takes the next step in his comeback from disgrace November 4 when he enters the ring for the second time since his March release from prison for raping a beauty pageant contestant. He had served three years of a six-year sentence.

"Don't forget I've been out of fighting for four years. If I had been competing for four years, you wouldn't even consider my fights as competitive. You wouldn't come and see," said Tyson.

"I have fought some of the so-called best in the world and they didn't last any longer than McNeeley," he added.

The November Mathis fight at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas will be shown live on Fox network television — in contrast to the pay-per-view deal that cost cable viewers around 50 dollars each on August 19 for less than one round of action against McNeeley.

The match-up is being promoted by Don King as "Tyson II — the road to the championship." King was not at Tuesday's news conference because he is on trial in New York for nine counts of insurance fraud involving a 1991 Julio Cesar Chavez fight that was cancelled.

His son Carl was master of ceremonies Tuesday.

Asked whether he was concerned his fight with Mathis would be hurt by the Riddick Bowe-Evander Holyfield bout on pay-per-view the same night, Tyson said:

"There's enough money, people and households to go round for everyone."

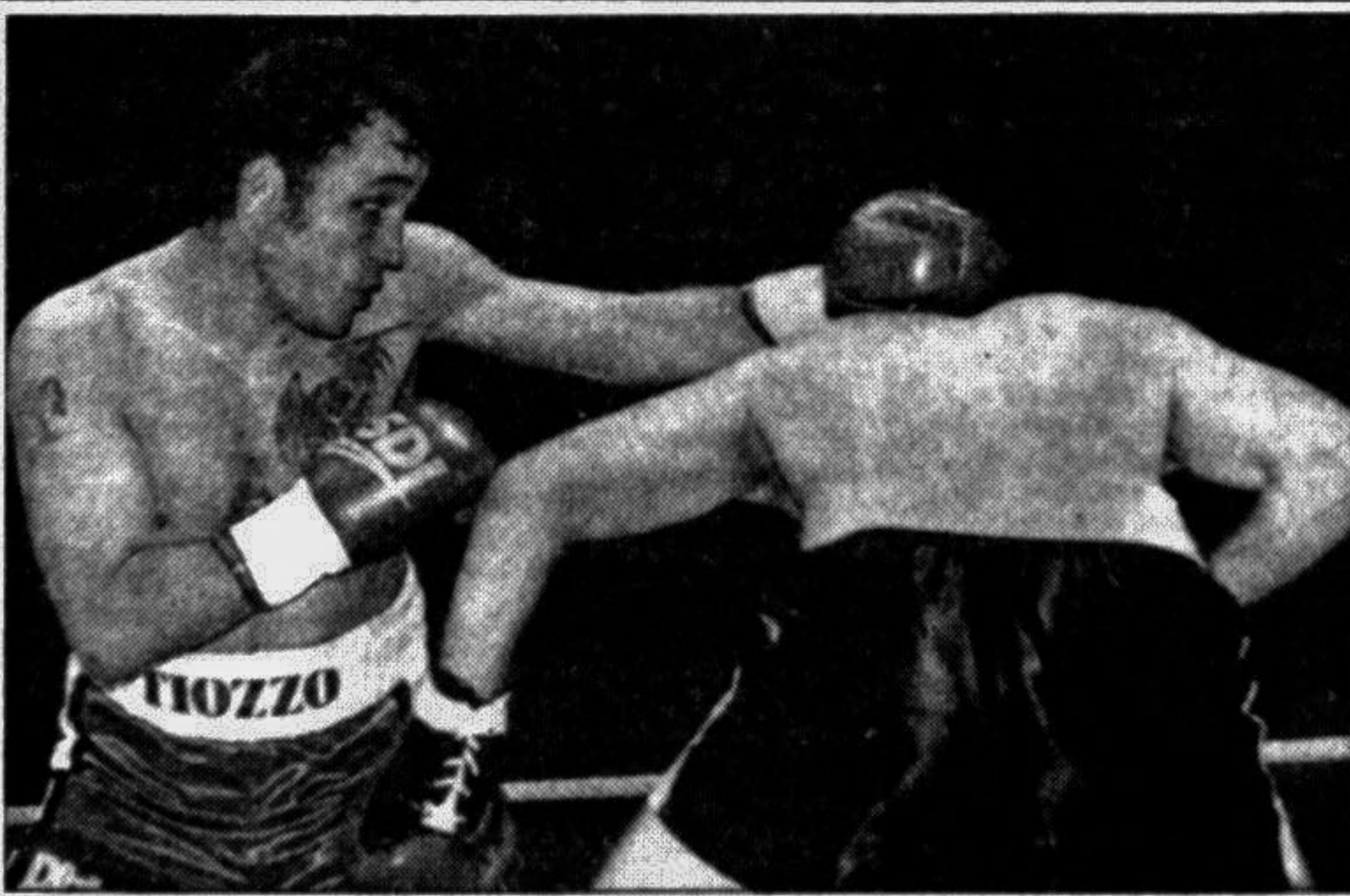
"I always wanted to fight on free TV. The last one (on cable) reached some 1.6 million households, but there are about 90 million homes out there, so many people have not seen me."

"I'm fighting on free TV, but I'm not fighting for free," Tyson said with a mischievous smile, to the guffaws of reporters.

David Hill, president of Fox Sports, said he hoped to use the programme — the first time a big bout has been on Network TV since the late 70s — to promote next year's schedule when Fox plans to televise bouts once a month.

The other fights along with Tyson-Mathis that evening will include a Terry Norris-Paul Vaden "grudge" match, and Frankie Randall, the only man to beat Chavez, against Juan Coggi.

Tyson, who became the youngest world heavyweight champion in 1986 at the age of 20, was confident the long lay-off from boxing would not affect him.



Christophe Tiozzo of France lands a left on American Robert Straw during their bout in Bron, France on Oct 26.

— AFP/UNB photo

The stage is set for Jansher

CARDIFF, Oct 27: World number one Jansher Khan was handed the perfect draw on Thursday in his bid for a record seventh World Open squash championship in Nigeria next month, reports Reuters.

Jansher, who is hoping to beat fellow Pakistani Jahangir Khan's tally of six world titles, avoided his chief Australian and English rivals who found themselves in the other half of the draw for the 110,000 dollars event, which runs from November 6-11.

Top-seed Jansher will face Australian world number 24 Craig Rowland in the first round. He is then scheduled to meet Irish outsider Derek Ryan in the second round and either compatriot Zarak Jahan Khan or England's world number seven Chris Walker in the quarter-finals.

Jansher's first real test should come in the semi-finals where he is drawn to meet fourth seed Peter Nicol of Scotland.

In the other half of the draw, Australians Rodney Eyles and Brett Martin, seeded third and fifth respectively, are set to clash in the quarter-finals.

The winner of that tie should then face England's Peter Marshall, the second seed, or sixth ranked Simon Parke.

Unexpected visit by a most desired guest

SOWETO, South Africa, Oct 27: President Nelson Mandela made a surprise early visit to the historic four-day cricket match between England and a South African Invitation XI at the Elkah Oval on Friday, reports Reuters.

Mandela was due to have visited the ground on Sunday, but arrived unannounced and spent an hour at the venue.

The official reason for his early visit was that he is addressing a political rally at nearby Orlando on Sunday. Mandela spent time with the players after being presented to both teams on the first morning of the game, which marks the long-awaited debut of first-class cricket in the South African townships.

The President then walked around the field cheered by a crowd of 5,000, most of whom were schoolchildren who had been given the day off.

Mandela said after his walkabout: "Sport unites the countries of the world because it speaks a language which is far beyond the reach of politicians."

"That cricket should come here to Soweto adds a new dimension to our efforts to build a new South Africa. You can see from the reaction of the children that cricket means a great deal to them."

England fast bowler Devon Malcolm, the only black player in the tour squad, described meeting the President as "The highlight of my career. I've met queens and presidents before a while playing for England, but this is it."

PSG end Metz unbeaten run

PARIS, Oct 27: Brazilian striker Rai hit two goals as second-placed Paris St Germain beat Metz 3-0 on Thursday to end the 14-game unbeaten run of the surprise French league leaders, reports Reuters.

It left the Paris club on 31 points from 15 matches, just one point behind Metz, but with third-placed Lens well-placed to challenge for the lead on 29 points and with a game in hand.

PSG took the lead after 11 minutes through a brilliant move by striker Patrice Loko. The former Nantes player penetrated the Metz defence before setting up midfielder Vicent Querin who scored from just outside the penalty area.

Rai hit the second by taking advantage of a blunder by Metz goalkeeper Jacques Songolo in the 36th minute before putting the issue beyond doubt with an astute lob almost on fulltime.

Although trailing 2-0 at the interval, Metz looked able to fight their way back into the match and tested the Paris defence on several occasions.

But PSG stayed cool under pressure and again had the ball in the net 25 minutes from the end but the shot from Loko was ruled off-side.

"We were well organised but a bit lucky," said Guerin. "This is a very good result."

Metz trainer Joel Muller said he was not too disappointed.

"Paris are very strong and we made too many technical mistakes, especially in midfield," he said. "It's not the end of the world but it's true that we were a bit lost today."

A minor scare for France



BRUSSELS, Oct 27: France was warned on Thursday that its ambitious plans to kick-off the next soccer World Cup finals in style may be ruled offside, reports Reuters.

The European Commission said it was worried Paris had broken EU rules in the way it awarded a contract to build the Saint-Denis Stadium to the Grand Stade Consortium.

If so, the Commission — the European Union's executive arm — could eventually force a halt to construction work on the 80,000 capacity showpiece stadium, denting France's plans to host the 1998 tournament.

FIFA, football's international ruling body, has awarded the 1998 finals to France but on condition it build an 80,000-seater stadium.

"On the basis of the information at its disposal the Commission considers that the procedure followed for awarding the contract (to build the stadium) could breach the provisions of the directive," on the attribution of public tenders, it said in a statement.

It said the Commission had sent a letter to Paris outlining its views.

Ivanisevic parts with Bob Brett

ESSEN, Germany, Oct 27: Fiery Croat Goran Ivanisevic has split with his coach Bob Brett after four-and-a-half years, reports Reuters.

"This is not about Grand Slam titles or money but about the standards I must pursue in my goal as a coach," Australian Brett said in a statement released at the Essen Open on Thursday.