

Aussies take stranglehold at the Gabba

Waugh Pakistan's predator

BRISBANE, Nov 10: Steve Waugh scored an unbeaten century to help Australia take a firm grip on the first Test after a dismal batting and fielding performance by Pakistan today, reports Reuter.

The tourists lost three cheap wickets late in the day after dropping eight catches as Australia compiled a massive 463 in their first innings.

At close of play on the second day, Pakistan were reeling on 40 for three after losing opener Salim Elahi, number three Rameez Raja and nightwatchman Saqlain Mushtaq.

Australia have completely outplayed Pakistan over the opening two days capitalising fully on a woeful display in the field by the tourists.

Waugh alone survived three chances on 15, 85 and 87 — on his way to a defiant 112 not out his ninth Test century and first against Pakistan.

Fast bowlers Craig McDermott and Glenn McGrath together with leg-spinner Shane Warne shared the wickets as Pakistan's top order collapsed during the final hour.

Waugh the fourth Australian batsman to reach his half-century survived two chances in one over before reaching his century in the final over before tea at the Gabba.

First slip Inzamamul Haq spilled a chest high catch after Waugh edged an attempted cut shot off a short ball from off-spinner Amir Sohail.

Two runs later with his score on 87, Waugh charged down the pitch and edged the ball again but wicket-keeper Moin Khan failed to take the catch.

The costliest miss had come on Thursday when Pakistan captain Wasim Akram

dropped a simple return catch early in Waugh's innings.

Fittingly given the tourists poor fielding throughout the Australian innings Waugh reached his century after a fielding error by substitute Mushtaq Ahmed who let the ball pass through his hands.

McDermott made the vital breakthrough at the start of the Pakistan reply when Salim Elahi, making his Test debut, edged a catch to Mark

Waugh earlier in the innings. Waugh finished with figures of three for 101 before limping off in the middle of his 30th over Wasim Akram and off spinners Saqlain Mushtaq and Amir Sohail each took two wickets.

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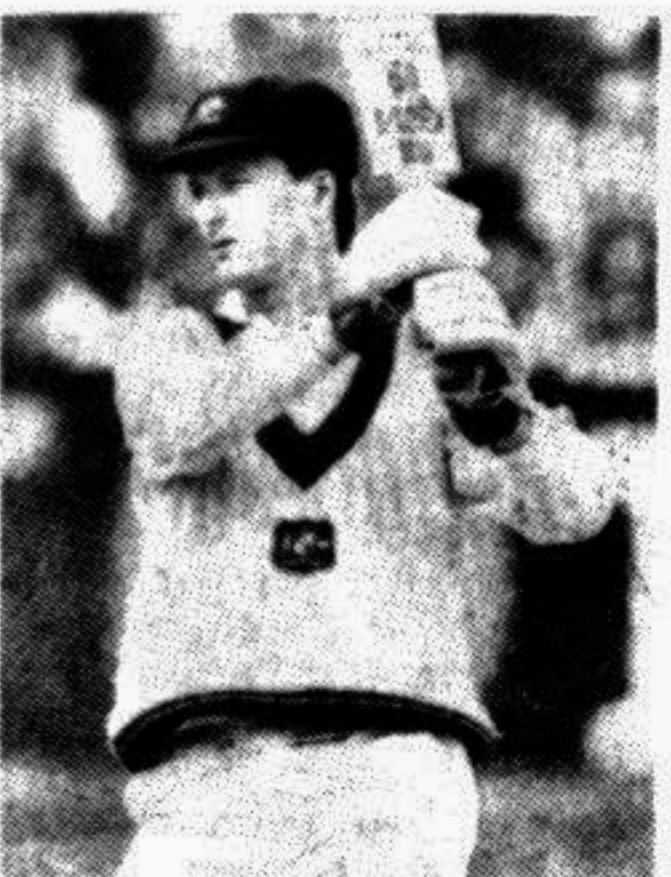
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STEVE WAUGH... 112 n.o.

Taylor at first slip with the score on 11 and the total 20.

Taylor snapped up a second chance when Rameez Raja edged a ball from Warne to leave Pakistan on 37 for two.

Three runs later Saqlain Mushtaq was trapped leg before wicket to McGrath of the last ball of the day.

In a further blow for Pakistan, fast bowler Waqar Younis was forced off the field late in Australia's innings with a calf injury joining batsman Salim Malik in the pavilion.

Malik did not take the field all day after requiring six stitches on a cut hand.

Resuming on 262 for four with Waugh unbeaten on 24 and all-rounder Greg Blewett yet to score Australia survived the first session without fur-

ther loss. Blewett added 135 runs for the fifth wicket before he was trapped leg before wicket by Waqar Younis the first of his three wickets.

Blewett became the fourth batsman to score a half century, matching the feats of captain Taylor, David Boon and Mark Waugh earlier in the innings.

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Bangladesh spikers nail Nepal

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh national volleyball team recorded their fourth straight sets (3-0) win over visiting Nepalese national team in their fourth and final exhibition match at the Mirpur National Indoor Stadium on Friday.

Bangladesh, who also won their previous three matches by the same margin, had no trouble yesterday when they recorded a convincing 15-4, 15-4 and 15-3 win.

Nepal came to Bangladesh as part of their preparation for the forthcoming Seventh SAF Games to be held in December in the south Indian City of Madras.

The visitors will return to their homeland on November 14.

Ijaz to take Anwar's place

BRISBANE, Nov 10: Pakistan's injury-stricken cricketers are to be bolstered by opening batsman Ijaz Ahmed senior, team manager Intikhab Alam said here Friday, reports AFP.

Ijaz will be flown to Australia to replace Saeed Anwar, who is still unwell in Pakistan after contracting typhoid in Sharjah.

Pakistan desperately need batting experience for the remaining two Tests of the series here.

The team's most accomplished batsman, Salim Malik, is nursing a left hand injury with six stitches.

Malik will bat in Pakistan's first innings of the first Test here-but he is taking a risk.

A further knock on the hand could put him out of action for the rest of the tour.

Wadekar angry

CUTTACK, Nov 10: Indian team manager Ajit Wadekar launched a verbal broadside after a rain-soaked pitch caused another washout in the third and final Test against New Zealand on Friday, reports Reuter.

"It's a big scandal and quite disgusting. This should not happen in a Test match," said Wadekar.

Play was called off without a ball being bowled on the third day, following the abandonment of Thursday's proceedings.

Cyclonic rain has meant just 173 minutes of the scheduled 18 hours of play has been possible on the first three days, with India scoring 120 for three on the opening day.

The sun shone on Friday but the pitch was found to be unfit, with wet patches on the surface having apparently been caused by water seeping through the plastic covers.

"The outfield has been made fit to play," said umpire V K Ramaswamy. "But the wicket has been badly affected by water seepage and the patches could not have dried during the course of the day."

The biggest of the patches, one among six, was six feet long and four feet wide.

Bibhuti Das, secretary of Orissa Cricket Association (OCA) which is hosting the Test, said pitch covering was supplied by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"It (the cover) could have been blown off," a groundsman said. "The covers seemed secure and of good quality."

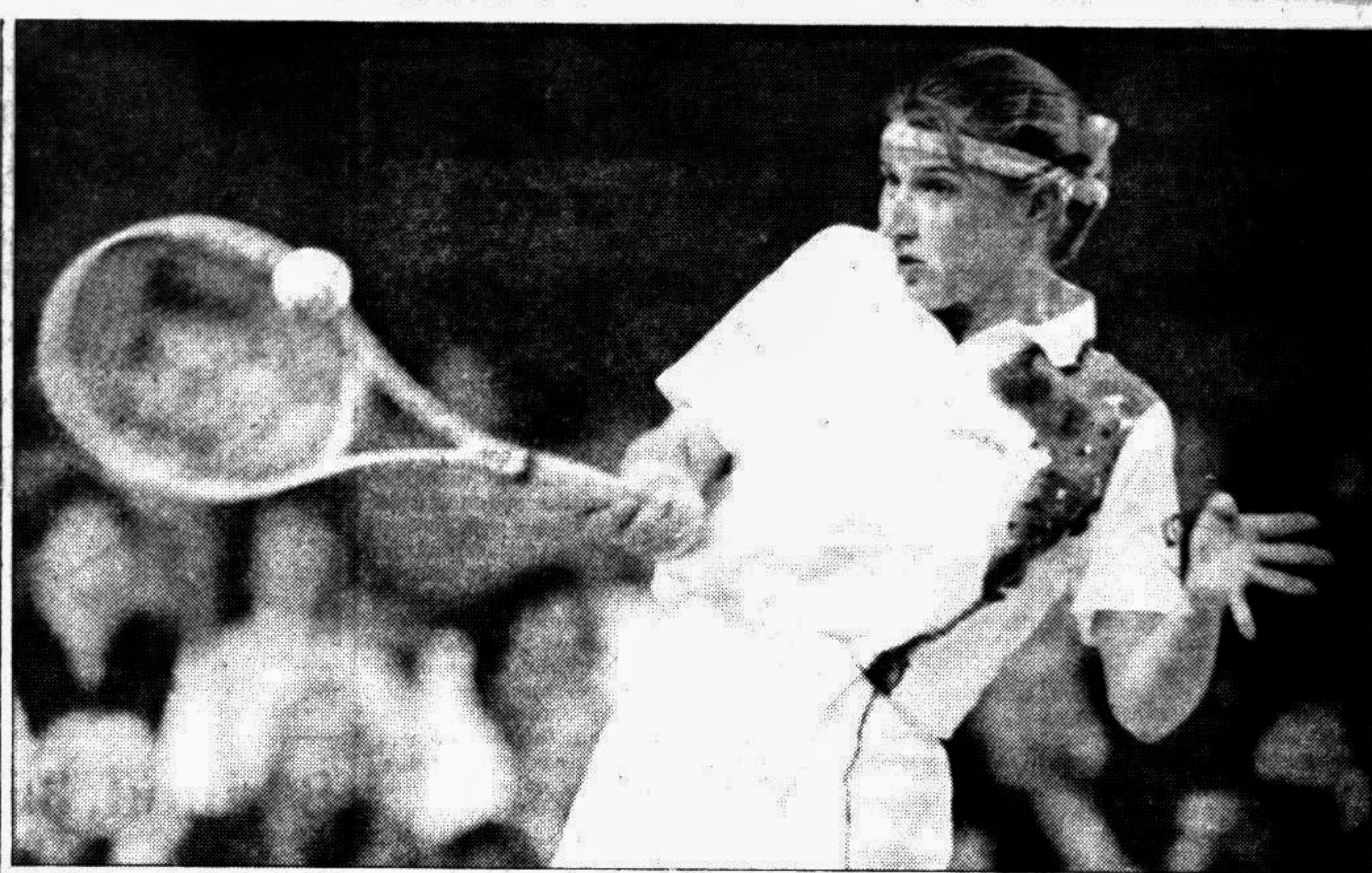
WBC flexes its muscles

BANGKOK, Nov 10: World Boxing Council (WBC) president Jose Sulaiman said on Friday punches to the kidneys and back of the head should be punished as harshly as head butts and punches below the belt, reports Reuter.

Sulaiman, speaking at the WBC annual convention in the northern Thai city of Chiangmai, also recommended that audiovisual systems be installed at rings worldwide to let doctors and officials stop a WBC fight if the boxer is hurt and the referee has missed it.

A WBC official said the Mexican had told some 300 delegates that installation of such systems by the body's nine continental affiliates would be "a big step towards prevention of fatal and serious accidents."

Sulaiman, recommending the tougher sanctions for punches to the kidneys and back of the head, stressed that "these could be more damaging than low blows and head butts."



World No 1 Steffi Graf of Germany plays a typical punishing forehand against American Meridith McGrath during their quarter-final match of the Advanta Championships in Philadelphia on Nov 9. Graf won 6-3, 6-2. — AFP/UNB photo

Graf regains composure

PHILADELPHIA, Nov 10: After surviving a close call in her opening match, top seed Steffi Graf appears to have regained her form with an easy quarter-final victory over unseeded American Meridith McGrath at the Advanta Championships on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The world number one needed less than an hour to breeze to a 6-3, 6-2 win that put her into Saturday's semi-finals.

The German star, who has claimed three Grand Slam titles this year despite struggling through injuries and personal problems, never faced a break point against McGrath, who had upset eighth seed Chanda Rubin in the second round.

"It was a very different match than the other day,"

said Graf, who pulled out a 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 second-round win over American Amy Frazier Tuesday after a first-round bye.

"I've really had a long break this year while everyone else has been playing," said Graf, who came to Philadelphia having played just one match since her US Open victory in early September.

"I'm used to having a lot of preparation for a tournament. I'm not used to long breaks," she continued. "I need to feel in shape and ready. I've been missing that all year long."

That was not apparent Thursday as Graf smashed winners from the baseline almost at will. She jumped out to a 3-0 first-set lead and won five successive games to close the match.

"It helps a lot to start off well," Graf said.

In second-round play, Romania's Irina Spirlea kept

alive her slim hopes of qualifying for the season-ending WTA Tour Championships by upsetting ninth seed Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 6-2, 1-6, 6-1.

Spirlea, who next faces veteran American Zina Garrison-Jackson in the quarterfinals, must reach the final to claim a berth in next week's 16-player season finale.

Unfortunately for the promising Romanian, Graf looms large between her and a place in the final.

Seventh-seeded German Anke Huber, who has already nailed down a berth in the WTA Tour Championships, shook off a slow start against Swiss teenager Martina Hingis to claim a place in the quarterfinals with a 2-6, 6-1, 6-2 victory.

"I was asleep the first set," said Huber, who next faces fourth seed Gabriela Sabatini. "It took me until the second set to wake up."

Eyles showed his courage by coming back from 10-6 down to win the fourth game. But Harris proved the stronger in the deciding game as the Australian made seven unforced errors.

Jansher played Parke all around the court early in their match, playing two rallies of 60 shots or more as he probed the Englishman.

Joao becomes 'Chief Havelange'

LAGOS, Nov 10: FIFA President Joao Havelange, who has promised Nigeria the 1997 World Youth Championship finals, won a traditional chieftaincy title in return, reports Reuter.

State television showed Havelange being decorated in ethnic costume as the title "Ekwueme" - the man who promises and delivers - was conferred on him in eastern Nigeria on Thursday night.

Hundreds of Nigerian dignitaries, including Sports Minister Jim Nwobodo, watched the elaborate ceremony which means from now on the Brazilian can be addressed as "Chief Havelange."

Havelange, on a four-day visit to Nigeria, apologised on Wednesday over FIFA's last-minute decision to prevent the African country from hosting the World Youth Championship finals in March after being informed there were outbreaks of cholera and meningitis at two of the venues due to state matches. The tournament was held in Qatar in April instead.

He said after talks with military ruler General Sani Abacha in the capital Abuja that Nigeria may be given the 1997 finals due to be held in Malaysia with the Asian country holding them in 1999.

Havelange was to end his visit to Friday after watching Nigeria play Uzbekistan in the second leg of the Afro-Asia Cup. Nigeria won the first leg 3-2 in Tashkent two weeks ago.

Kafelnikov keeps going

MOSCOW, Nov 10: Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov, struggling with a knee-injury, beat Frenchman Cedric Pioline 7-5, 6-1 in the second round of the Kremlin Cup on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Kafelnikov said he may need surgery but planned to play in next week's ATP tour Championship finals in Frankfurt first.

"The injury is really troubling, me. But the Frankfurt tournament is incredibly important," he said.

Top-seeded Kafelnikov will meet Zimbabwe's Byron Black in the next round on Friday. Black beat Switzerland's Jakob Hlasek 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Reminder to referees!

ROME, Nov 10: Italy's soccer referees have been urged to whistle less often and keep play flowing, reports Reuter.

According to statistics released by Paolo Casarin, overseer of Italy's referees, Serie A matches were currently averaging 41 fouls a match compared to 25 in the English Premier League, 32 in Spain, 33 in Germany's Bundesliga and 28 in European Cup Ties.

Italy was also level with Turkey when it came to players taking a dive in the penalty this season.

"For the first time in years, Serie A has more fouls than Serie B," said Casarin, a former international referee.

Eyles suffers shock exit

NICOSIA, Nov 10: Englishman Del Harris greater stamina earned him a quarter-final victory over second seed Rodney Eyles of Australia in the World Open squash tournament on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Harris won a gruelling match lasting almost an hour and a half 15-13, 10-15, 12-12, 15-12.

But there was no such joy for Harris compatriot Simon Parke. He was beaten in straight games by world champion Jansher Khan.

Harris played some of the most exciting squash of the tournament so far, cutting shots at oblique angles off the side walls, dancing round slow-moving balls to position them at his leisure and recovering twice to win rallies after falling over.