

Greece celebrates Panathinaikos' triumph

ATHENS, Apr 12: Thousands of Greek fans took to the streets in Athens on Thursday to party all night after Panathinaikos were crowned European basketball champions in Paris, reports Reuter.

The Greeks beat Spain's Barcelona 67-66 and minutes after the televised match ended the city came alive with blaring horns red and green flares and dancing.

Mayor Dimitris Avramopoulos lit up the city's streets and ancient monuments to honour the winners. Television and radio stations broke into their programmes to bring the good news.

The party soon spread around the country in cities, towns and villages with thousands of people pouring on to the streets waving Greek and club flags and singing the Greek National anthem.

Panathinaikos, the most expensive club in Europe, won the title after two failed attempts where they were beaten in the semifinals by Greek rivals Olympiakos.

Greek pharmaceuticals tycoon Pavlos Yannakopoulos has spent more than 40 million dollars the past four years to sign a team of stars, including former NBA all-star Dominique Wilkins. Panathinaikos top scorer in their European campaign.

It was the first European clubs' championship ever won by Greek team in a country where basketball is the most popular sport with an avid following.

In contrast to the Panathinaikos joy, a few dozen frustrated Olympiakos fans went on to the streets of nearby Piraeus smashing windows and setting fire to rubbish bins.

Armenian boxers seek asylum

COPENHAGEN, Denmark Apr 12: Two Armenian boxers who took part in last week's European Amateur Boxing Championships in Denmark, have stayed on and asked for asylum, police said Wednesday, reports AP.

The two men, who were not identified, defected from the Russian team on Tuesday and asked for asylum at the local police station in Vejle, western Denmark, where the championships had been held.

Police declined to say on what grounds the man, aged 24 and 26, sought asylum. The alien Board refused to comment on specific cases.

Pre-Olympic tournament India stun Asian champs



ATLANTA, Apr 12: India provided the surprise result Thursday on the first day of the six-nation pre-Olympic tournament, which started on a makeshift warm-up pitch because the artificial surface at the Olympic venue of Clark Atlanta University was still in the process of being laid, reports Reuter.

India beat South Korea, the Asian champions, 3-0.

It was India's first win in five matches with the Koreans, who beat them in the Asian Games final of 1994. But the Koreans did not play anywhere near their best on a slow pitch with unsafe surroundings.

India's match-winner was one of their substitutes, Baljit Singh Dhillon, who scored with flick shots from two of India's first three corners, which came in the 25th and 44th minutes.

The match was marred by an incident in the 50th minute in which the Korean Yang Kyun Jong swung his stick violently across the legs of the Indian player Sanjeev Kumar, apparently in retaliation for a blow on the head with an elbow.

Jong was shown a red card for a permanent suspension and was later banned for the next three games of the tournament by the tournament director, Eric Donegani of Canada.

It is one of the severest sentences for a red card offence in an international tournament and means Jong can play only in the final game of the tournament next Wednesday.

Sanjeev Kumar, the Indian player involved in the incident, was shown a yellow card (temporary suspension) but hobbled off and took no further part in the game.

While both teams were down to ten men, two minutes later, the Indian right-winger Mukesh Kumar hit a brilliant third goal for the Indians to seal the game.

Indian coach Sedic de Souza would not comment on the red card incident, saying he did not see it.

But he added: "I am delighted that we capitalised on our scoring chances today. We don't always do so against the Koreans and it is certainly too long since we last beat them."

Tahir Zaman, the Pakistan inside right, gave his side the lead three minutes into the second half from an Asif Bajwa free hit.

Pakistan's second goal also followed a free hit and was scored by Kamran Ashraf, who also added a third with a simple tap-in from Mohammad Shahbaz's pass. Shahbaz added the fourth himself after Mohammad Sarwar cut in from the back line.

Mansoor-u-Hassan, the new Pakistan team coach, said afterwards: "I am happy with the result of a game played on a bumpy pitch. The surface was not good for the skill of my players but they settled better in the second half."

Mansoor also complained

that five of his players had suffered abrasions through falling on a pitch inevitably dirty with building work going on for the main pitch at Clark, which the organisers are hoping will be ready for the next series of matches on Saturday.

Rob Thompson, Britain's tall centre forward, Matlock from a honeymoon in Malaysia, scored Britain's first two goals in a 5-2 victory over the hosts, the United States.

Russell Garsia, who shot against a post from a penalty, won by Thompson earlier, later scored twice in the last six minutes while Calum Gilles, a corner specialist who goes onto the field only for set plays as in American football, got Britain's other goal from one of only two corners they forced.



Syeda Afsana Parveen Nira pondering her next move against former champion Tanima Parveen (not in the picture) in their 17th national women's chess championship third round encounter yesterday. Nira lost the board to Tanima who recorded her third successive win. — Star photo

Women's chess Pattern unchanged

Sports Reporter

Former champion Tanima Parveen kept her lead intact in the 17th national women's chess championship defeating Syeda Afsana Parveen Nira in her third round clash at the NSC chess room yesterday.

The win ensured Tanima stayed atop the ten-player standings with three points from as many matches, half a point ahead of last year's runner up Afroza Khanam Bably who has two and a half points to her credit after beating Faizunnissa Poly in the round.

Defending champion Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa and Zakia Sultana were in third position jointly with two points apiece. In the day's round Nipa outplayed Jahanara Haque Runu while Zakia overpowered Nazrana Khan Iva for their second point.

Traffic in Atlanta goes hi-tech

ATLANTA, Apr 12: Georgia officials announced a 140 million dollars traffic-control system based on fiber optics on Thursday, calling it the world's most advanced technological network of its kind, reports Reuter.

After being speeded up by a decade to be ready in time for the Olympics, Georgia's intelligent transportation systems will employ an army of cameras, electronic signs and synchronised traffic lights to guide commuters through the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Officials at the state transportation department said the system also will include 100 "talking" buses equipped with preprogrammed automated announcements. Nearly 90 buses owned by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority already have location systems that use satellites.

In June, officials said, a four-month federal project called traveller information showcase will begin providing traffic news on hand-held computers, in-vehicle navigation units, cable television, the internet and on interactive hotel television sets at a local Holiday Inn.

High-tech traffic-control centres are ready to begin operations in Atlanta and neighbouring DeKalb county. Three suburban counties are expected to come on line before the Olympics begin on July 19. A fourth, Cobb county, will not be fully operational in time for the Games.

The intelligent transportation systems operation is designed to update information about traffic flow on inter-state highways and other major thoroughfares through a network of sensors and video cameras.

Forty-one programmable electronic signs are to go into operation over the three 12-lane inter-state highways that encircle the Atlanta area. Eight signs already are operable.

The system also includes 12 low-power radio units that broadcast traffic updates on the 530 am radio frequency.



Thomas Muster, the world No 1, executes a forehand during his match against Spanish youngster Carlos Moya at the Estoril Open in Lisbon, Portugal on April 11. Muster won 6-4, 6-2. — AFP/UNB photo

Sampras, Chang in qtrs

HONG KONG, Apr 12: Top seed Pete Sampras fought off an aggressive challenge from Australia's Patrick Rafter to reach the quarter-finals of the Hong Kong Open on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Fellow American Michael Chang, seeded to meet Sampras in the final, had a few anxious moments before reaching the last eight with a 7-5, 6-3 win over Hendrik Dreekmann of Germany.

Sampras found difficulty coping with Rafter's big-kicking serve but was rock-solid on his own serve as he carved out a 6-3, 7-6 (7-1) win in one hour and 13 minutes.

Rafter, who has been out of action since the Australian Open in January because of a wrist injury, matched Sampras for long periods but the world number 89 could not live with the American in the vital second set tiebreak.

In the first set I was going pretty well, but I was never really happy returning his serve or on top of my game. His serve has given me problems before... it kicks high and he mixes it up," said Sampras. "But my serve was going good and I played really well in the tiebreak."

Sampras will meet Germany's David Prinosil in the

last eight today. The number eight seed eased past Wayne Arthurs of Australia 6-4, 6-4.

Chang, seeking his third straight Hong Kong Open title, was surprised by the ferocity of Dreekmann's ground shots but the American's consistency saved the day.

The world number four battled back from 2-4 down in the first set to win it 7-5 and he played solidly to take the second set 6-3.

"He started off in great style and kind of surprised me," said Chang. "It was the first time I have played him and he has a huge forehand which he used effectively. It was a tough match and it's good to come through it."

In the quarter-finals Chang will play the unseeded Martin Damm of the Czech Republic who had a comfortable 6-3, 6-2 second round win over Gianluca Pozzi of Italy.

Asia's leading player Shuzo Matsuoaka reached the last eight with an upset 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 victory over third-seeded Australian Mark Woodford.

The Japanese world number 66 reproduced the form which took him to the last eight at last year's Wimbledon championships to defeat Woodford, who is ranked 44 places higher.

"I was injured at the Australian Open in January and have hardly won a match since then but last week in the Davis Cup and here this week I have played much better," said Matsuoaka, who enjoys film star popularity in Japan. "I feel I can play the way I want to at the moment."

The 1991 Hong Kong Open champion, Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands, moved safely into the quarter-finals with a 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 win over Russia's Alexander Volkov.

"It was a tough match today. I had to work hard for victory," said Krajicek, the fourth seed. "I have played well in practice and an feeling good about my game."

The Euro soccer landscape

UNDATED, Apr 12: AC Milan isn't playing like a champion, but that's what the team is likely to be for the fourth time in five years when the Italian league season ends next month, reports agencies.

Despite back-to-back unimpressive outings, the Red and Blacks still have a six-point lead over defending champions Juventus with five games left.

Milan play their second of three straight road matches at Napoli in Sunday's 30th round, and will have the benefit of knowing how Juve did against Sampdoria on Saturday.

Coach Fabio Capello's club escaped Cagliari with a 2-1 win Wednesday night thanks to two own-goals by the Sardinians. The league played the rare midweek schedule to make up matches wiped out by the March 16-17 players strike.

"I don't deny that we were a little bit lucky," Capello said. "But our lead is unchanged, so I have to consider it a positive evening."

That fortuitous victory followed a scoreless draw with Lazio. Both games were marked by Milan's inability to control midfield play and free up attackers.

That should change in Naples, however, with the return of Liberian striker George Weah. The Golden Ball winner has missed the last four league games with a broken arm.

In addition to leading the team with 10 goals, Weah provides a spark on offence, opening space for teammates and often feeding them winning assists. His return will relegate Italian international Marco Simone to the bench.

The constant for Milan this season has been their defence, who have assumed their customary spot atop the league (18 goals allowed: next-best is Inter Milan with 25).

Veteran sweeper Franco Baresi, suspended against Cagliari, will play Sunday, not that he's needed: The goal that gave Napoli, 10th of 18 clubs, their 1-0 win over Torino on Wednesday was just the team's second in nine matches. Napoli's anemic attack has registered a league-worst 24 goals this season.

Juventus host Sampdoria a day ahead of the rest of the schedule to give the Turin side extra time to prepare for their Champions' League semifinal second leg at Nantes, in France, next Wednesday.

To keep alive their hopes of a repeat, Juve must be careful not to slip up against equally hot eighth-place Sampdoria, who won the teams' first encounter 2-0.

The place Fiorentina, who are at Udinese slid to 10

points behind Milan with a 4-0 rout at Lazio of Rome Wednesday. Their title aspirations snuffed, the Florentines are likely to let up in league play and point to defeating Atalanta of Bergamo in the Italian Cup final. The first leg is April 24.

Roy Hodgson's Inter Milan, who face bottom club Padova, will need to recover from their midweek defeat if they are to snatch a UEFA Cup play-off.

In Spain, league leaders Atletico Madrid's hopes of clinching their first ever double.

Singaporean gamblers arrested in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Apr 12: Thai police said today they had arrested six Singaporean men the first foreigners to be netted in a crackdown on illegal gambling on European soccer reports Reuter.

The six, who police said were all tourists, were arrested late on Wednesday in the lobby of a central Bangkok hotel.

They had lists of bets they had placed on Italian soccer results, a police officer told Reuters.

They claimed they were only gamblers not bookmakers, and said they laid the bet with bookmakers in Singapore, the officer said.

He said the six would probably be fined and released. Virtually all types of gambling are illegal in Thailand.

Thai police recently launched a crackdown on soccer gambling, estimated to be worth millions of dollars every week and connected to syndicates elsewhere in Southeast Asia, some of which allegedly have been involved in fixing matches.

Police in the southern Thai province of Phuket said on Wednesday they arrested two Thais suspected of involvement in the increasingly popular but illegal pursuit.

The country's police chief, who ordered the crackdown earlier this month, was cited in local newspapers today as saying the Phuket arrests had netted valuable information which could lead to the arrest of bookies across the country.

One illegal bookmaker in Bangkok told Reuters this month his weekly turnover of bets on football was worth up to 300 million baht (12 million dollars). He said English soccer was the most popular.

An economic research group said in a recent report issued before the police crackdown that nearly 50 billion baht (2 billion dollars) will be gambled on soccer in Thailand this year.

ble zoomed upwards following the side's 1-0 win over Barcelona for the Spanish Kings Cup.

In a hard fought match, Atletico defeated Barcelona in overtime Wednesday to win the Cup.

But with seven rounds to go in league play and with only three points separating them from second placed Barcelona, Atletico knows a league triumph remains an uphill battle.

On Sunday Atletico host Betis, a side lying in fifth and pushing hard to reach next season's UEFA Cup. Atletico will be facing a Betis side that has lost only three games away from home.

Atletico's march to the title, though, will face their greatest challenge when they travel next weekend to the lion's den, Barcelona, for a game many believe could decide the championship.

Barcelona, for their part, while likely to be distracted by next Wednesday's UEFA Cup semifinal return game against Bayern Munich, faces a middle-ranking Racing Santander.

Real Madrid, meanwhile, travel to relegation-threatened Sevilla hoping for a drastic change in their fortunes after a series of poor results which has left them in mid-table and with little chance of qualifying for Europe.

In Paul McGrath's seven seasons at Manchester United, the club never won a league title. On Sunday, the veteran Irish centerback can play a

major part in helping the Reds win the English Premier for the third time in four years.

Provided a septic toe doesn't rule him out, McGrath lines up in an Aston Villa defence which will be trying to keep out Newcastle's talented forwards, including Colombian Faustino Asprilla, Frenchman David Ginola and England's Les Ferdinand and Peter Beardsley.

If it succeeds, Manchester United likely will have an eight or nine point lead in the title race and that should all but wrap up the championship.

Newcastle badly need a victory to stay in contention with Manchester United, who face relegation-threatened Southampton the previous day.

Third place Liverpool who are eight points behind and have little chance of catching United, are not in action until Tuesday when are involved in a Merseyside derby with Everton and fifth place Arsenal face Tottenham on Monday.

In the Bundesliga, leaders Bayern Munich and champions Borussia Dortmund face tough encounters Saturday away to fourth-placed Stuttgart and home to fifth-placed Schalke respectively.

In France, the championship race has turned into an exciting three-horse race between leaders Auxerre, who have never won the title, Paris Saint Germain and unfancied Metz, who last week secured a UEFA Cup spot by winning the League Cup.

Indian Open results

NEW DELHI, Apr 12: Unseeded German Alex Radulescu crushed second-seeded South African Wayne Ferreira 6-1, 6-1 to reach the quarterfinals of the Indian Open on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Ferreira became the fifth seed to exit the tournament, following Swiss Jakob Hlasek (4), Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman (5), Britain's Tim Henman (6) and Belgian John van Herck (7).

"I am very excited to have beaten a player in the top 10 in the world," Radulescu said after his 45-minute victory. "I know his game very well. I've seen him on television a lot."

But the German added: "He seemed to know little of me."

Third seed Byron Black of Zimbabwe and eighth seeded Frenchman Jerome Golmard easily won their matches.

In other second round action, unseeded Christiano Caratti of Italy beat Sweden's Davis Cup player Nicklas Kulti 7-6, 7-5.

Mixed fortunes for seeds

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida, Apr 12: Top seed Conchita Martinez won easily, second seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario survived a tough battle and fourth seed Chanda Rubin was ousted convincingly Thursday at the 450,000 dollars Bausch and Lomb championships, reports Reuter.

Martinez, the defending champion here, needed a scant 39 minutes to defeat the 97th-ranked Janette Husarova of Slovakia 6-0, 6-0 in the third round. The world number two Spaniard lost only 18 points in the 70-point match.

"I feel great. I won 6-1, 6-0 against a top 10 player," Hack said. "I could make her play really bad, not because of her, but because of my style. She got insecure and didn't know what to do."

Rubin lacked the patience necessary to make inroads into Hack's barrage of deep groundstrokes. All of the American's balls seem to land a foot beyond the court boundaries or into the net.

Things fell apart for Rubin after she held serve in the first game. While Hack took advantage of six of 10 break points, Rubin never converted on the nine chances she had to break serve.

"I was really disappointed with my effort today," Rubin said. "I should have tried to do different things, but everything was all jumbled up in my head. I was a little frustrated and I missed too many balls."

Jecmenica had a golden opportunity to beat Sanchez Vicario when she led 3-2, 15-40 in the second set. Sanchez Vicario, who was treated on court by the trainer for a sore right shoulder, was able to save her serve in that sixth game and won the next three to even the score at one set apiece.

Two service breaks in the fourth and sixth games of the final set put Sanchez Vicario, a two-time champion here, into the quarter-finals.

"I never gave up and started concentrating better," Sanchez Vicario said. "I wanted to show her I was strong, so she could see I'm not ping to give up."

12th-seeded Sabine Hack of Germany annihilated the sixth-ranked Rubin 6-1, 6-0 in 61 minutes.

Today's quarter-final pairings are Martinez against seventh-seeded Mary Pierce of France, Sanchez Vicario against 13th-seeded American Meredith McGrath, eighth-seeded Irina Spilrea of Romania against Barbara Schett of Austria, and Hack against sixth-seeded American Mary Joe Fernandez.

Employing a classic topspin game, featuring high bouncing balls landing deep in the court, the 33rd-ranked Hack owned the day against Rubin.

"It feels great. I won 6-1, 6-0 against a top 10 player," Hack said. "I could make her play really bad, not because of her, but because of my style. She got insecure and didn't know what to do."

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Mike's dark odyssey lingers

INDIANAPOLIS, Apr 12: A year after his release from prison, Mike Tyson is marooned in Ohio while police investigate a complaint he sexually assaulted a woman at a Chicago nightclub, reports AP.

Tyson, on probation for a 1992 rape conviction, may leave Ohio only for emergencies or reasons approved in advance during the investigation, said George Walker, chief probation officer for Marion County, where Tyson was convicted.

An out-of-state boxing match would likely be allowed, he said.

There would be no problem with that," Walker said Thursday. "We're not going to prohibit him from making his livelihood."

Tyson won the WBC title last month against Frank Bruno. His next fight is scheduled against WBA champion Bruce Seldon on July 13 in Las Vegas.

On Tuesday, a Gary, Indiana, woman claimed she met Tyson at The Clique, a popular nightclub on Chicago's South Side, and that he kissed and bit her face, touched an unspecified part of her body and forced her to touch him.

Chicago police have given no indication how long their investigation of the alleged incident will take.

In 1992, Tyson was convicted in Indianapolis of raping a

victim in Indianapolis of raping a contestant in the Miss America pageant. The original sentence was 10 years in prison, but Judge Patricia Gifford suspended four years and, with time off for good behavior, Tyson served half of the remaining six years before he was released on probation from the Indiana Youth Center in March 1995.

If Tyson is charged in Chicago, Marion County probation officials would submit a petition to Gifford, a Criminal Court judge. Gifford would then schedule a fact-finding hearing to determine whether Tyson violated his probation.

Gifford could tighten the conditions of the probation or add other restrictions, such as electronic monitoring, if she finds the boxer violated his probation, Walker said.

The worst thing that could happen is that the judge could order execution of the remaining sentence, which in his case is four years," Walker said. "The judge could send him back to prison for four years."

Gifford, who spoke with Walker on Wednesday, referred all calls about Tyson to the probation office.

Walker said his office is waiting for Chicago police to decide whether to file charges or complete its investigation before taking any other steps.

"People ask me, What do you think will happen? We're not even close to that stage

yet. We haven't seen a written report yet. There's still a lot to be seen yet," he said.

Walker said that under Tyson's probation, there is no rule restricting him from visiting bars.

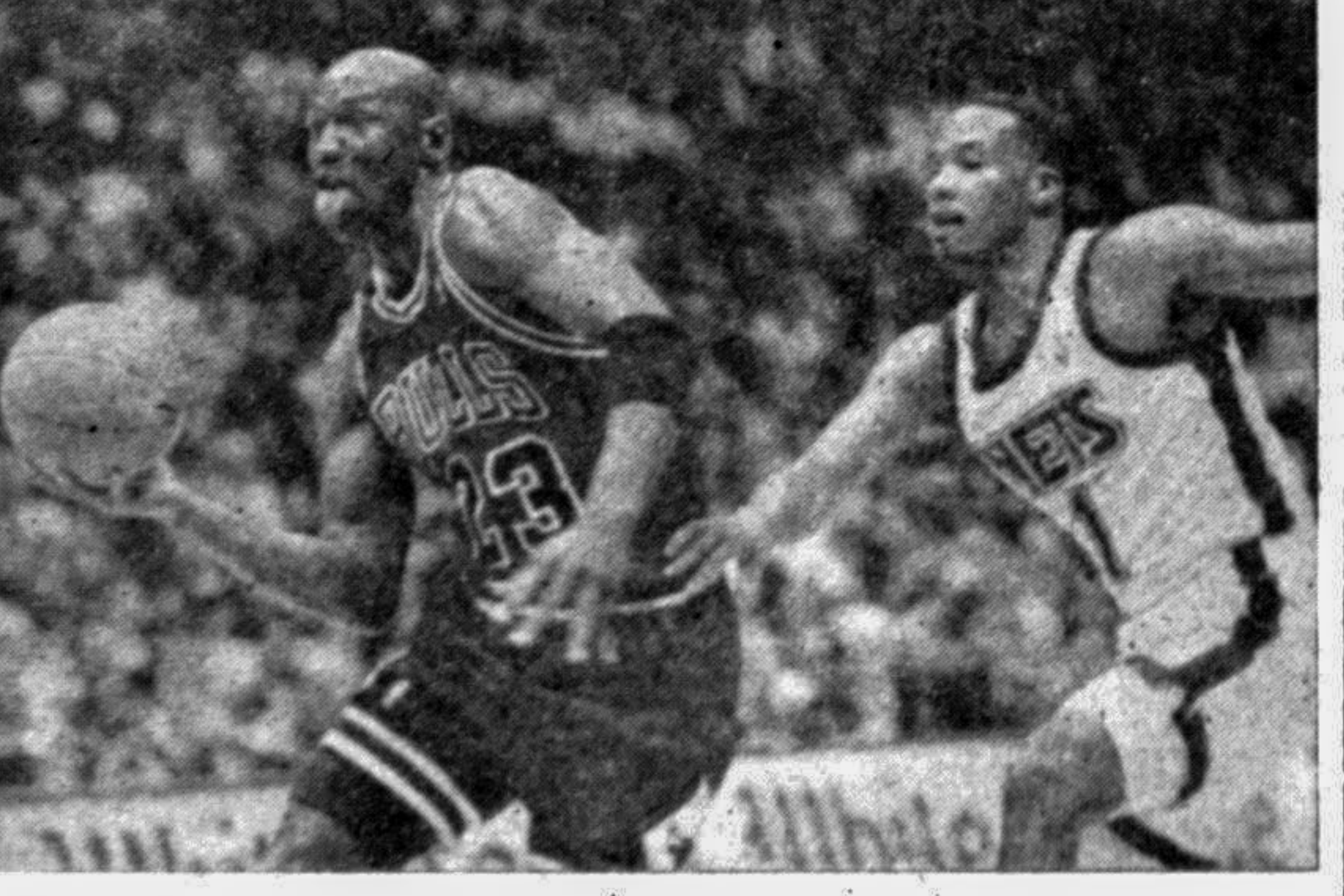
"Yes he can go. But is it smart? No. It's common sense that you wouldn't want to put yourself in a potentially difficult situation, which is what he did," he said.

Tyson, who became a Muslim and visited a mosque for a prayer service immediately after his release from prison, reportedly has made regular visits to bars and nightclubs in recent months. That is strongly discouraged by Islamic teaching, a spokeswoman for the American Muslim Council in Washington said.

"Islam prohibits drinking, and while it doesn't prohibit visits to bars, it highly recommends that those places be avoided," said the council's media coordinator, Kareema Altomare. "Things are forbidden which by engaging in them it's impossible for the individual to foresee the long-range consequences."

Tyson's attorney, Alan Dershowitz, said Thursday he doubted the Gary woman's story.

"He is an easy target for gold diggers because he is a very wealthy man and he is vulnerable to false accusations," Dershowitz said.



The one and only Michael Jordan of Chicago bulls dribbles past New Jersey Nets' Chris Childs during their NBA encounter at East Rutherford, NJ on April 11. — AFP/UNB photo