Atletico tighten grip

MADRID. Apr 21: Atletico Madrid took a giant step towards the first Spanish league title in 19 years when they won 3-1 away to second-placed Barcelona on Saturday, reports

It left Atletico six points clear of Barcelona with just five games left to play.

Atletico's international playmaker Jose Luis Caminero rediscovered his form after several weeks in the doldrums and in the 15th minute beat defender Miquel Angel Nadal to set up Bulgarian striker Lyuboslav Penev for the visitor's first goal.

Barcelona equalised on the half-hour when Jordi Cruffy latched on to a cross from winger Luis Figo to back head the ball wide of Atletico keeper Juan Molina.

But in the second half Atletico came out strongly. going ahead in the 53rd minute when midfielder Juan Vizcaino blasted a magnificent half-volley past Barcelona keeper Carlos Busquets. Caminero had the ball in

the net soon afterwards but the goal was disallowed for a foul on defender Sergi Barjuan and the Atletico playmaker then hit the post with a superb 25-metre drive. Barcelona went close to

equalising but substitute Angel

Cuellar shot wide after being

put through by midfielder Ivan

de La Pena. As Barcelona pressed forward in the closing stages. Leonardo Biagini broke clear to notch the third for Atletico.

Bastia hold leaders

PARIS, Apr 21: Bastia threw the French championship wide open on Saturday when they held leaders Auxerre to a draw and left Paris St Germain a great chance to regain top spot, reports Reuter.

The 1-1 draw at Bastia left Auxerre on 65 points, just two clear of arch-rivals PSG, who host bottom club Martigues on Tuesday.

The Parisians, their morale boosted by qualification for the European Cup Winners' Cup final last Thursday, should be confident of regaining the lead with three games remaining.

Auxerre started well against Bastia, going ahead in the 22nd minute through a superb volley from Algerian international Moussa said.

But Bastia fought back with spirit to create a succession of Chances and Bruno Rodriguez equalised from one of them shortly before the break.

It was enough to halt a run of five consecutive wins by Auxerre.

"We relaxed a bit after we scored the opener and this is exactly what we should not have done," said Auxerre coach Guy Roux.

"Paris will probably take over on Tuesday but they started the season as favourites and we have other challenges. like the cup final," he added. Auxerre meet Third Division nies in the final on May 4.

Third placed Metz also stumbled in their title challenge as they were held to a 1-I draw at lowly St Etienne and now trial Auxerre by three

Monaco continued their late challenge by beating Le Havre 2-1 to be four points behind in fourth place.

Iraq wants a foreign trainer

BAGHDAD, Apr 21: Iraq disappointed at not qualifying for the recent Atlanta Olympics, is seeking an international coach to prepare for future international events, reports AFP.

The Iraq Football Federa tion (FIF) on Sunday announced its intention to hire a coach before the qualifying rounds for the December 3 to 20 Asian Cup finals.

Iraq are in Group 6 for August's qualifying group in Amman, comprising Iraq, Jordan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Amman is also the venue

for their World Cup qualifying Group 9 including Kazakhstan and Jordan to be played in early 1997.

FIF's decision comes less than a month after Iraqi Olympic hopes failed. Iraq were beaten 1-0 in Malaysia by Saudi Arabia, who will go to Atlanta along with South Korea and Japan.

Coach Anouar Jassam and his assistant, brother Thair, were axed from their positions after the loss and are not allowed to coach anywhere in

the country for five years. The Iraqi press said Jassam adopted a "defensive attitude

which had no effect." Jassam however blamed the

lack of competition against major international teams because of the embargo on the country since their invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The brothers, however, are likely to carry on their other job of coaching youngsters in Qatar, which they did as an extra to their Iraq duties.

The players may come out worse as a ban from leaving Iraq's borders hangs over their head, though four have already signed contracts in Malaysia and Qatar.

Eric, the adored bad boy



LONDON, Apr 21: Manchester United's mercurial French striker Eric Cantona comple-

transformation from soccer bad boy to hero when he was voted England's Footballer-ofthe-Year on Saturday, reports Cantona, who received 36

per cent of the votes from the Football Writers Association, beat Chelsea's Dutch import Ruud Gullit into second place with new England cap, Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler. third.

The Frenchman's season began late after he completed an eight-month ban for his infamous kung-fu kick at a Crystal Palace supporter in January

But he has made up for lost time in spectacular style, providing the inspiration for Manchester United's bid to clinch their second cup and

league double in three seasons. Cantona had missed only one of the 36 league and cup games that United have played since his return and has netted 17 goals. Significantly, he has scored seven goals in the past eight games, of which four have been match-winners.

United manager Alex Ferguson said: "This award proves the value of British justice. It is well deserved because there is no doubt that Eric Cantona has been the best player in the country this season. Cantona, in France for a

weekend break, said: "I am very proud and privileged. It is

ROK spikers Atlanta-bound

TOKYO, Apr 21: South Korea beat Japan in four sets on their opponents' home ground in the man's volleyball Asian qualifying round on Sunday to secure a berth in the Atlanta Olympic Games, reports AFP.

The Korean spikers, whose hopes revived after Japan crashed to China on Friday. showed fine service receiving to score a 15-10, 17-16 '3-15, 15-13 victory.

It was sweet revenge for the Koreans after they suffered a humiliating straight-sets defeat to the Japanese in Seoul a week ago, which seemingly dashed their hopes for Atlanta.

South Korea ended the four-team round robin with five wins against one defeat. ahead of Japan on 4-2, China on 3-3 and winless Australia. Earlier in the day at the National Yoyogi Gymnasium,

China downed Australia 15-7, 11-15, 15-2, 15-7. Japan will have to play the

final qualifying round to be held in Greece May 3-5 for their last chance to go to

individual event World Cham

in the women's floor exer-

cise finals, the highlight of

these World Championships.

youth may have actually hurt

and 15-year-old Vasiliki

Savadaridou of Greece both

tumbled well and had the au

dience eating out of their

hands, only to receive disap-

pointing identical scores of

9.775 and finish tied for fifth

perhaps due to their lack of

fending champion Gina Gogean

of Romania and Yuanyuan Kui

floor helped to make up for

the snub of teammate Xuan Liu

on uneven bars Friday. Liu

failed to earn a medal after

performing what was widely

Her low score may have

been a result of the one-arm

giant swing she performs

Judges have been trying to

discourage the move for

women because of the risk of

pointed, because we thought

Liu deserved a higher score.

win a gold for my country."

eremeta with 9.80.

9.887.

week."

Kui said." I'm happy I could

tie between 1992 Olympic

floor exercise champion

Lavinia Milosovici of Romania

and Ukrainian Lioubov Sh-

Marinescu of Romania, a 1996

Olympic hopeful, had to settle

for a silver medal on balance

beam with 9.812, behind 1994

Goodwill Games winner Dina

Kochetkova, who won with a

Olympian Dominique Dawes

and Xuan Liu of China at 9.80.

In third were 1992 US

Dawes, the 1993 world Sil-

ver medallist on beam, appears

to have recovered from the in-

juries that have plagued her

the past year, and may be in

downs, and I'm just happy I

can go into the Olympics this

way," said the 19-year-old. "It

was a good way to end the

featured some familiar faces.

The men's competition also

Vitaly Scherbo, a six-time

"I've had my ups and

the best shape of her life.

Fifteen-year-old Alexandra

Third place on floor was a

were very disap-

considered the best bar rou-

tine of the night.

of China, who tied at 9.85.

The event was won by de

Kui said the gold medal on

reputation among the judges,

Spanisard Gemma Paz, 14

pionships, reports Reuter.

two finalists.

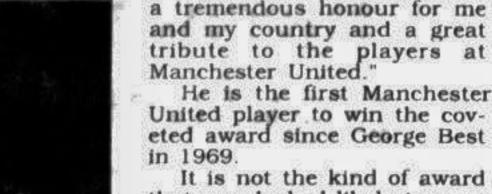
to Rico, Apr 21

Youngsters took a

back seat to vete-

rans in Saturday's

finals at the 1996



It is not the kind of award that ever looked likely to come Cantona's way after a volatile career which has seen him fined and suspended by several of the clubs he has played for and also banned from the French team for a year after swearing at the coach.

At one French disciplinary hearing, after being banned for three matches for throwing the ball at a referee, he walked up to each committee member and said: "Idiot."

His ban was increased to two months and he responded by announcing his retirement from soccer. But the following year he moved to England where he helped Leeds United with the league championship before moving on to Manch ester United.

His attack on the fan last season not only earned the lengthy suspension but initially a two-year prison sentence. But that was commuted on appeal to 120 hours of community service.

ROLL OF HONOUR

LONDON, Apr 21 (AFP): Past winners of England's Footballer-of-the-Year award. 1948: Stanley Matthews (Blackpool)

ERIC CANTONA

1949: Johnny Carey (Manchester Utd) 1950: Joe Mercer (Arsenal) 1951: Harry Johnson (Blackpool)

1952: Billy Wright (Wolverhampton) 1953: Nat Lofthouse (Bolton) 1954: Tom Finney (Preston)

1955: Don Review (Man 1956: Bert Trautmann (Man City) 1957: Tom Finney

(Preston) 1958: Danny Blanchflower (Tottenham) 1959: Syd Owen (Luton) 1960: Bill Slater

(Wolverhampton) 1961: Danny Blanchflower (Tottenham) 1962: Jimmy Adamson

(Burnley) 1963: Stanley Matthews (Stoke) 1964: Bobby Moore (West

1965: Bobby Collins (Leeds) 1966: Bobby Charlton (Man 1967: Jack Charlton (Leeds)

1968: George Best (Man 1969: Dave Mackay (Derby) and Tony Book (Man City) 1970: Billy Bremmer

(Leeds) 1971: Frank McLintock (Arsenal) 1972: Gordon Banks

took third on high bar, behind

Spaniard Jesus Carballo and

he was happy with his deal, he

agreed the scores of many

gymnasts didn't reflect the

well on high bar, but the

judges were a little bit strange

today," he said. "Nobody could

Carballo became Spain's

"I think it's a very good re-

understand what they wanted."

sult," said the 20-year-old. "I

don't know how to explain it in

words. This is a big step for

Ceron, McColgan

win London

Marathon

Ceron of Mexico, the only man

to have won the London

Marathon twice, powered

home in the last few kilome-

tres to capture the race for the

third successive year in 2

hours 10 minutes 2 seconds

won by just three seconds.

Ceron cruised to victory on a

hot spring morning 25 sec-

onds ahead of Belgian Vincent

2:10:42, just took third place,

seconds ahead of 19-year-old

26 miles 385 yard (42.195

km) course guaranteed Evans a

place in Britain's team at the

Olympics in Atlanta, if he

wants to run the marathon

rather than the 10,000 me-

ing in her third London

Marathon as part of her con-

tract with the organisers

worth 750,000 dollars, ran

with superb tactical awareness

to win the women's race for

Norwegian great Grete Waitz.

who won this race in 1983 and

1986, timed her attack per-

fectly, staying back in the pack

until the 20-mile marker be-

fore overtaking long-time

leader Anita Haakenstad of

Norway, who faded to finish

Joyce Chempchumba be-

came the first Kenyan woman

to finish among the medals in

Poland third in 2:30:17.

McColgan, now coached by

the first time in 2:27:54.

Liz McColgan of Britain, rac-

Britain's Paul Evans, in

That performance over the

Rousseau, second in 2:10:27.

Kenyan Jackson Kabiga.

Unlike last year when he

on Sunday, reports Reuter.

LONDON. Apr 21: Dionicio

Scherbo said that although

"I didn't expect to do so

Bulgarian Krasimir Dounev.

quality of their routines.

first world champion.

SAN JUAN, Puer- 1992 Olympic gold medallist, Spain."

(Stoke) 1973: Pat Jennings (Tottenham) 1974: lan Callaghan (Liverpool) 1975: Alan Mullery

(Fulham) 1976: Kevin Keegan (Liverpool)

(Liverpool) 1980: Terry McDermott (Liverpool)

(Ipswich) 1982: Steve Perryman (Tottenham) 1983: Kenny Dalglish (Liverpool) 1984: Ian Rush (Liverpool)

1986: Gary Lineker 1987 Clive Allen John Barnes 1988:

1989: Steve Nicol (Liverpool) 1990: John Barnes (Liverpool) 1991: Gordon Strachan

(Leeds) 1992: Gary Lineker (Tottenham) 1993: Chris Waddle (Sheff Wed)

1994: Alan Shearer (Blackburn)

1995: Jurgen Klinsmann (Tottenham) 1996: Eric Cantona (Man

MOSCOW, Apr 21: Russia's Yelena Nikolayeva set a world best of 41 minutes 04 seconds for the women's 10-km track walk on Saturday, reports

Izhevsk on June 8 last year.

Woodies win another one

TOKYO. Apr 21: Australia's world number one doubles pair of Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde underlined their status by winning the men's doubles title at the Japan Open

Sunday, reports AFP. The three consecutive-time Wimbledon doubles champions' overwhelmed the secondseeded Mark Knowles of Bahamas and Ric Reach of the United States 6-2, 6-2, continuing to assert themselves as the doubles team to beat in The Australians, winning

the Japan Open for the first time as a team, collected the winners' cheque of 63,000 dollars. It was the fifth doubles title

for Woodforde and Woodbridge out of eight tournaments they played this year. Their victories also included the first two Super Nine tournaments at Indian Wells and Key Biscayne. With their 34th doubles ti-

tle as a team, they moved up to fifth place on the all-time winning teams list, being tied with the American duo of Bob Lutz and Stan Smith.

Hoyer-Larsen leads Danes' blitzkrieg

HERNING, Denmark, Apr 21: Poul-erik hoyer-Larsen claimed a record-equalling third successive men's singles title as Denmark enjoyed a clean sweep at the European Championships on Saturday. reports Reuter.

Hoyer-Larsen, the world number two who had begun the tournament with shock defeats by Jens Olsson and Jeroen van Dijk in the team event, needed just 32 minutes to overcome his compatriot and training partner, Peter Rasmussen, 15-5, 15-11.

Rasmussen, seeded two, staged a fightback in the second game to lead 11-10. But a string of unforced errors eventually allowed Hoyer-Larsen to equal the three in a row record achieved by another Dane. Flemming Delfs, in

"I am very relieved and happy to have won the title again and delighted to equal the record," said the All-England champion.

"I was not fully prepared for this week and that showed during the team event. But now I can begin to focus on my main target of a medal at this year's Olympic Games. "I knew I had to keep

pressing Peter to the back. He is a very good player but he still needs to learn not to be aggressive all the time. He has to work on his defence. Camilla Martin, the 1992

beaten finalist, confirmed that she is in a class of her own in Europe with a 14-minute 11-0, 11-3 demolition of Russia's Marina Yakusheva. In a marathon women's

doubles final. Lisbet stuer-Laurdisen and Marlene Thomsen recovered from dropping the opening game to defeat fellow Danes Rike Olsen and Helen Kirkegaard 6-15. 15-12, 15-10.

Y elena's record

Reuter.

Nikolayeva, competing at the Russian walk championships at the Black Sea resort of Adler, broke the previous best of 41:29 clocked by Russian Larisa Ramazanova in

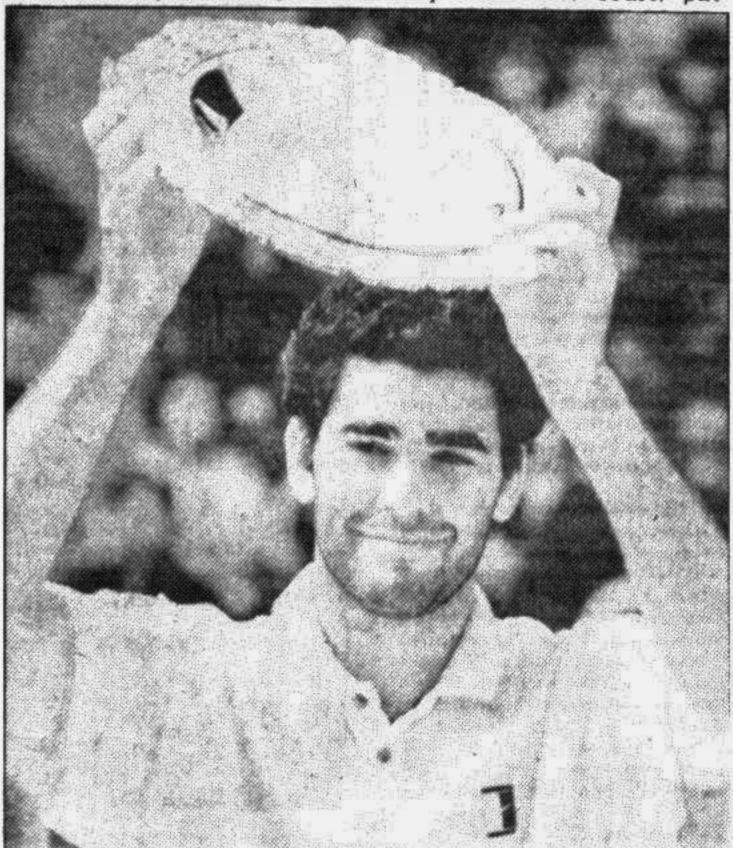
Pete, Date triumph in Tokyo



TOKYO, Apr 21: World No 1 Pete Sampras, wielding an aggressive forehand. beat fellow American Richey Reneberg 6-4.

Sampras broke again at 5-6 with a forehand passing shot down the line and then served out the match.

Sampras. maneuvering around to hit forehands from all parts of the court, put



World No 1 Pete Sampras of the USA proudly holds aloft the Japan Open trophy after dismissing compatriot Richie Reneberg 6-4, 7-5 in the final at Tokyo yesterday. - AFP/UNB photo

7-5 in the Japan Open final Sunday, winning his second tournament in two weeks, reports AP. Sampras regained the top

ranking from Austrian Thomas Muster by winning in Hong Kong last week and protected it with his latest triumph, his fourth in eight tournaments so far this year. He has a 1996 record of 29-

3 in singles matches. Against Reneberg, who ousted No 2 seed Michael

Chang in the semifinals. Sampras kept up his strong serving, allowing only one break-point, which Reneberg converted in the second set's sixth game by pounding a shot into the corner and charging the net, forcing a miss. But that merely evened the second-set breaks, and



the start. Reneberg, ranked 63rd in

Reneberg under pressure from

the world, had to save three break-points to win the first

started out with service win-

and 121 mph). Sampras got his first-set break in the seventh game with a backhand cross-court

passing shot and a double-fault by Reneberg. He broke again in the second set's first game with an

overhead and then a passing shot wide by Reneberg. "I really served well," said

it pretty well. wanted to hit some serves that were significant and scare him a little bit." he added. He won 74 per cent of

nal, top seed Kimiko Date forced errors with her sharpand beat American Amy Frazier 7-5, 6-4 for her fourth Japan Open women's title in five

Japan Open final in which Date and Frazier had met. Frazier won last year after the Japanese player had beaten her in 1994 for her third straight title.

shots, keeping her under pressure. After two exchanges of service breaks in the first set. Date broke agains at 5-6 with a series of forcing shots. After two more breaks each

Frazier forehand down the line went long, and she held serve for 5-4. The Japanese player reached match point when

hour, 18-minute match when Frazier hit a backhand long. Trying to overcome Date's speed. Frazier had 56 unforced errors to 37 by Date.

world, collected 29,000 dollars for her victory. Frazier,

Americans aiming higher



Ten of the 12 champions

Clay Bey, a corrections officer, lost to Joseph Mesi, 18 with a 26-11 decision

switched from left handed to right-handed. The tactical change worked. He caught Mesi with a devastating right hook and knocked him to the canvas in the opening round. and the referee stopped the

> "Everybody was writing me off because of my age and when I lost everybody really wrote me off." Clay-Bey said. "The sign of a true champion is to be able to come back in the face of adversity. I'm back. Light flyweight Alberto

Guardado, 21, also worked his way through the box-offs with two wins against Jauquin Gallardo. Guardado was the overwhelming favourite at the Olympic trails held April 3-7 in Oakland, California, but finished runner-up. Guardado defeated Gallardo

by a 23-11 decision in Saturday's final after beating him 15-11 on Thursday "I worked 11 years for

this," Guardado said. "The tri-Olympics.

the United States will likely rake in some silver and bronze medals Tarver, at 27 the second oldest man on the team, has already beaten Cuban and Rus-

put off the prose to fight in the Olympics," said Tarver, the first American to win the US nationals. Pan American Games and World Championships in the same year. "We have an Olympic team

going to the best prepared and conditioned team at the Olympics. Other Olympic qualifiers were three fighters from Philadelphia — Zahir Raheem, 119 pounds (54 kg), Terrance

Also qualifying were Eric Morel at 112 pounds/51 kg. Floyd Mayweather at 125 pounds (57 kg). David Diaz at 139 pounds (63.5 kg), Fernanddo Vargas at 147 pounds (67 kg). Roshii Wells at 165 pounds (75 kg) and Nate Jones, 201 pounds (91 kg).

He is the son of former welterweight contender Floyd Mayweather, now serving a 5 1/2-year sentence in a federal prison for drug trafficking. He s also the nephew of Roger Mayweather, a former twotime world champion who works his nephew's corner for most of his fights.

going to be a boxer," Mayweather said. "But the Olympics is a dream." The US team will open

to the election of selectors.

with it."

game. In all, he saved seven of Sampras, meanwhile,

ners of 204 and 194 kph (128

Sampras, who collected 154,000 dollars his victory. "It was windy and hard to get a rhythm, but I think I handled

his service points. In the women's singles fi-

shooting and speedy retrieving It was the third consecutive

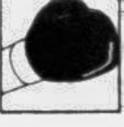
Date chased down some of the heavy-hitting Frazier's best

in the second set. Date survived one break point when a

Frazier hit a forehand crosscourt wide and won the one-

Date, ranked ninth in the

AUGUSTA, Geor-But on Saturday, Clay-Bey



least seven medals in Atlanta. improving on a disappointing American showing four years ago, reports Reuter

from Olympic trials earlier this month, including light heavyweight world champion Antonio Tarver, won their first round matches here this week and thus qualified for the Olympic team without having to go to a second round in the box-offs which concluded on

However, Olympic trials champion Lawrence Clay-Bey at 30 the oldest member of the team, won a spot after working his way back from a first-round loss in the super heavyweight division

Saturday

gia. Apr 21: The US boxing federation have produced a 12-man Olyinpic team that is

aiming to win at

als loss put me way back and I had to win twice, but that makes it that much sweeter. I will win a medal at the Though the world champion Cubans are expected to

dominate the gold medal-haul.

sian boxers this year. He is a solid gold medal possibility.

that's going to surprise some people," Tarver said. "We are

Cauthen, 132 pounds (60 kg); and David Reid, 156 pounds (71 kg)

Mayweather, 18, comes from a family of fighters.

'I just always knew I was

what is believed to be its longest training camp ever in bend, Gregon, April 30. The

seeded third here and ranked 26th on the women's tour received 14,500 dollars.

camp will last 10 weeks and stop in three other cities-

and back here in Augusta. US coach Al Mitchell is taking a tougher stance with the 1996 team. "We don't want them with the pro-trainers, going to the

Marquette, Michigan, Miami,

Mitchell said. "All I want them thinking about is the Olympics. The last team (1992) was just satisfied to be there. We are going there to win medals At the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, the United States won only one gold, one silver

movies or seeing the ladies."

and one bronze. "What happened in '92 shouldn't have happened." Mitchell said. "That team was one of the best teams we ever had. But those guys were just

The 1996 team is the United States' most internationally experienced since the 1972 Olympics at Munich." Mitchell said. To give them more interna-

happy to be there.

bers and alternatives will participate in a series of dual meets. Four dual meets are currently planned. Two are against Germany, May 17 in Portland, Oregon, and May 23 in New Orleans. Two are against Russia. June 14 in

Portland and June 17 in Mi-

tional experience, team mem-

Illy's diplomatic no to Botham

LONDON. Apr 21: Ray Illingworth, chairman of selectors, looks to have put a block on former all-rounder lan Botham being called up to help England cricket out of the doldrums, reports Reuter. lan might have a role in the

him this season," said Illingworth on Saturday. New England coach David Lloyd said earlier this week he would love to see Botham involved in some capacity, despite the former Test star's failure to win a place on Eng-

future but we won't be using

land's selection committee. But Illingworth made it clear that the popular Botham would have to waft.

Tve spoken to David and

he's got to put his personality

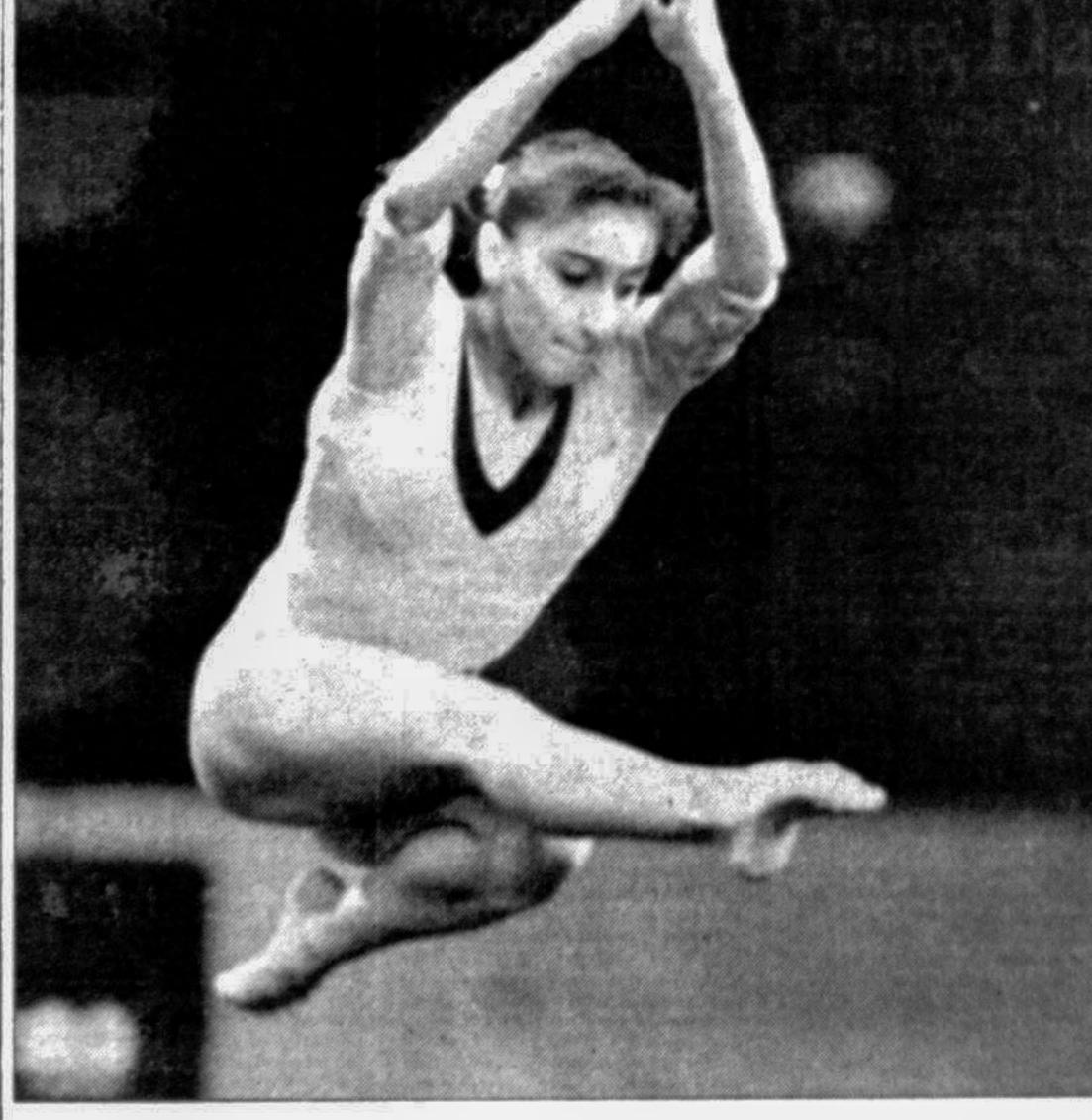
on the team (England)," said Illingworth. "I don't think that would be easy with lan around. "That's not being detrimental to either of them but I feel it's best to let David get on

Illingworth was speaking after the first meeting of England's selection committee when he and Lloyd were joined by the two new members, Graham Gooch and David Graveny. Botham has been critical of

what he saw as a campaign

against him during the run-up

"He's been in print a lot in the last couple of days, which hasn't done him a lot of good," said Illingworth.



London by taking second place in 2:30:09, with last year's winner Malgorzata Sobanksa of

1977: Emlyn Hughes (Liverpool) 1978: Kenny Burns (Nottm Forest) 1979: Kenny Dalglish

1981: Frans Thijssen

1985: Neville Southall (Everton) (Everton) (Tottenham) (Liverpool)

Experience rules the day

Hong Chul Yeo and Italian Andrea Massucchi shared the silver with 9.743. On parallel bars. Rustam Sharipov of Ukraine claimed his first world title with a score of 9.75. He was followed by Scherbo and Nemov, who tied with 9.737. Nemov finished third in the pommel horse event Friday, the day Scherbo won the floor exercise

In men's vault, Russian

Alexei Nemov retained his title

by scoring 9.756. South Korean

Splendour, grace, elegance ... that's Gina Gogean for you. Here the Romanian super girl performs during the floor exercises at the World Gymnastics Championships Apr 20. -AFP/UNB photo