

Blood, sweat and glory

LONDON, Apr 22: Over 4,000 runners, more than one seventh of the field in the London Marathon, needed medical attention during the hottest race in the event's 16-year history on Sunday, reports AP.

Fun runners showed the strain as temperatures pushed up to 21°C (70°F), with thousand sinking down in exhaustion after completing the gruelling 26.2 mile course.

St John Ambulance Brigade said 4,175 people had received some kind of treatment, many for minor ailments such as cuts, grazes, bruises and blisters.

Of these, 68 needed hospital treatment, spokesman Mark Welsh said.

In addition, 114 spectators needed treatment, and 12 were taken to hospital, he added.

The temperature, 40 higher than the previous warmest race in 1986, brought extra pain for fun runners raising millions for charity, some of whom sported heavy outfits shaped like animals and made of fur or rubber.

British heroine Liz McColgan completed a remarkable comeback from injury by storming to victory in the women's race while the men's was won for an unprecedented third consecutive year by the Mexican Dionicio Ceron.

Thousands lined the route from Blackheath to the finish point in The Mall, outside Buckingham Palace, to cheer on the runners in the event.

They saw countless demonstrations of bravery, one of the most moving of which came when Chris Moon, who lost his right hand and lower right leg when he trod on a landmine in Mozambique, crossed the line hand-in-hand with his friend Bob Copsey, a former soldier who also lost his lower right leg in a similar incident in Rwanda.

Graf's double delight

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil, Apr 22: Steffi Graf not only won another tennis tournament in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday, but she was visited by soccer idol and sports minister Pele, reports AP.

Graf won the Rio Classic final Sunday afternoon, beating Spain's Conchita Martinez 2-0 in sets of 7-5 and 6-3.

Pele visited the top ranked Graf and gave her a Tee-shirt promoting Rio's candidacy as the host of the 2004 Olympic Games.

Seles to be back in Barcelona

NEW YORK, Apr 22: Monica Seles, sidelined for the past three months with a shoulder injury, announced that she will make her only tune-up for this year's French Open in a clay-court event in Barcelona next month, reports AP.

Seles, in town to promote the release of her upcoming autobiography "Monica: From Fear to Victory," has not competed since January. Her injury makes it nearly impossible for her to serve. She made the announcement on Friday.

The book will be released in mid-June. Just after the French Open, it will be the first time she has participated in the Grand Slam event in Paris since she was stabbed on April 30, 1993.

Seles won three consecutive French Open titles from 1990 to 1992.

Lewis right on to target

WALNUT, California, Apr 22: Carl Lewis, owner of eight Olympic gold medals, believes he is on schedule to qualify for his fifth Games as a 35-year-old, reports AP.

"I'm not an 1-told-you-so person, but we trained to be ready in June and if anyone thinks we're not going to be ready in June they're in for a surprise," he said after winning the 200m in 20.19 seconds at the Mt. Sac relays here.

It was another confidence booster after his 100m win at the Texas relays on April 6. He will try out his long jumping at a meet in Houston, Texas, in two weeks.

Lewis, who will be 35 when the Atlanta Games begin in July, had found the perfect response to critics who put him down as over the hill after the US indoor championships in March.

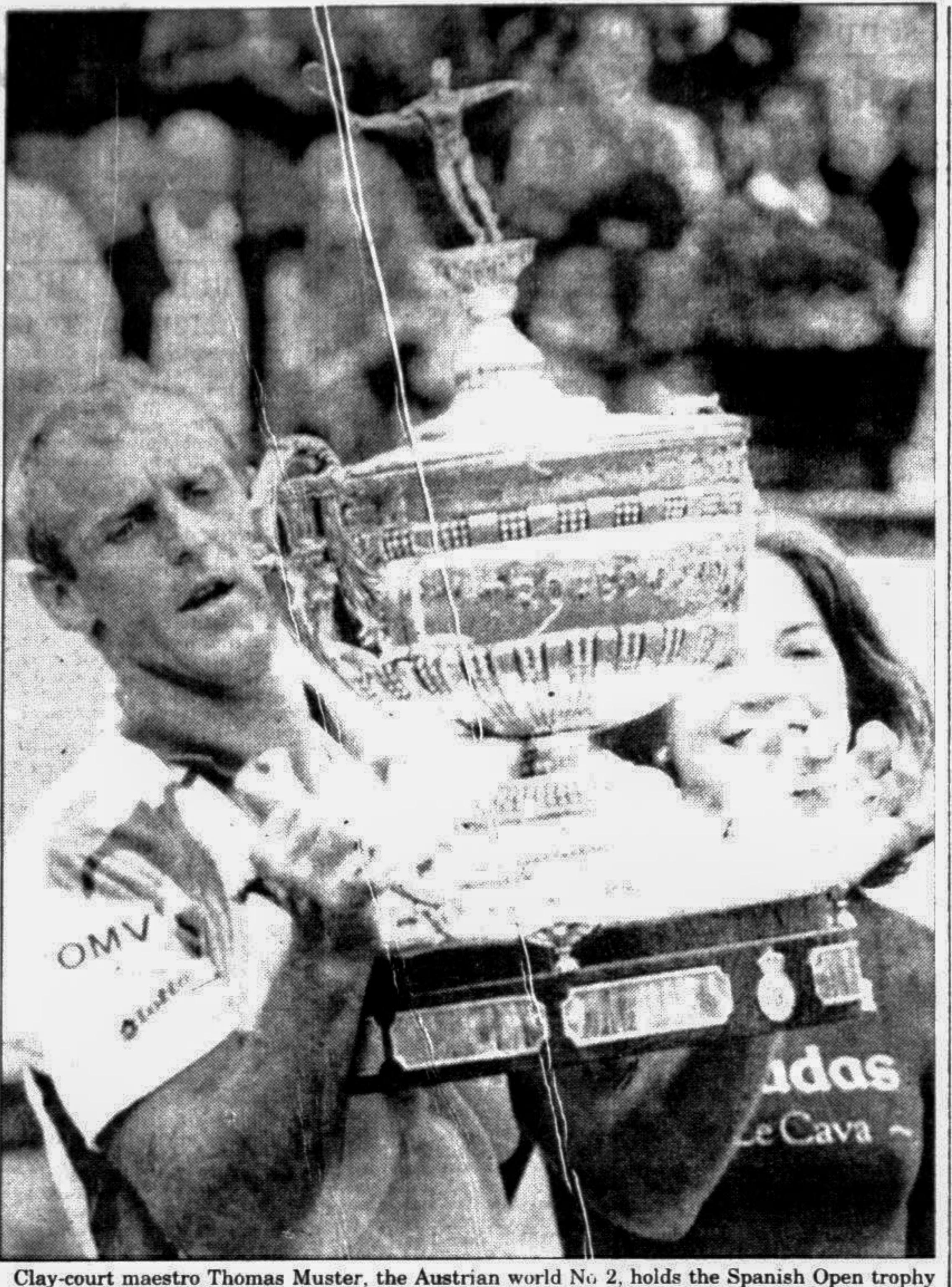
He has competed at three Olympics since 1984, although he did qualify for the 1980 Moscow Games which the United States boycotted. The US Olympic trials will be at Atlanta in June. He got off to a tremendous start although he said he saw room for improvement in his first 50 metres.

"The middle hundred was as good as I can run it," he added. Santa Monica Track Club teammate Floyed Heard was second in 20.42.

Trinidad's Ato Boldon claimed the year's best 100m time in 9.93 sec. He equalled the meet record set in 1992 by Mike Marsh, whose late surge brought him second place in 9.95.

The University of California, at Los Angeles, student, who ran 10.19 last week, said he could have run faster.

Boldon said it was too early in the Olympic season to read much into the time.



Clay-court maestro Thomas Muster, the Austrian world No 2, holds the Spanish Open trophy high after overcoming Marcelo Rios of Chile 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 in the final on Apr 21.

— AFP/UNB photo

Muster on another streak



BARCELONA, Apr 22: Thomas Muster retained his Spanish Open title on Sunday, ousting Chilean sixth-seed Marcelo Rios — and then took a verbal swipe at Andre Agassi in their ongoing debate about American domination of the sport, report agencies.

Muster criticised US control of the circuit on Friday, saying it meant clay-court tennis was dying because tournaments played on the surface were squeezed into just eight weeks.

Agassi responded on Saturday by suggesting the Austrian "would not be so paranoid if there weren't so many people following him everywhere" and Muster could not resist the temptation of another verbal swipe.

His comments probably come from eating too many Hamburgers with English meat," said Muster, after clocking up his 30th consecutive

victory on clay with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 win over Rios.

Agassi, who pulled out of the Spanish Open, has been in Barcelona to film a television commercial.

Muster, who last week yielded his number one world ranking to Pete Sampras, lost his serve in the third game but broke back twice to take the fifth set.

Rios survived two break points at 4-4, kept his serve and then broke Muster to take the second set but after a break at the beginning of the third set there was no way back for the Chilean.

"I knew when I took the first set, even though he won the second, that I would win. He tired and started missing a lot of balls towards the end," said Muster, whose third title of the season was achieved in characteristically uncompromising styles.

Muster had words of praise for Rios after the game. "He's a great player with a great future, though perhaps his shots

are more suited to slower hard courts than clay," he said.

Muster now returns to the Monte Carlo tennis tournament in the midst of another long victory streak as the 2.2 trillion dollars tourney begins Monday.

Muster won the final last year in a dramatic comeback against Boris Becker after the Austrian was two sets down and saved two match points. He went on to win the tournament and added the Italian Open and the French Open on his way to a 40-match winning streak on clay.

This year he has six tournaments in a row and is in the middle of another streak, stretching up to 30 matches dating back to August of last year.

If he wins at Monte Carlo it will be a unique triple double for winning those three tournaments in a row for the second consecutive year.

Muster is top-seeded in the event. He has won once before, in 1992.

Safe sail for Medvedev



MONTE CARLO, Apr 22: Ukraine's Andrei Medvedev erased painful memories when he beat Spaniard Alberto Berasategui in the second round of the 1.9 million dollars Monte Carlo open, rep-

acting the 22-year-old Ukrainian since his professional debut.

Actually it was a blood infection in one of my nostrils because my nose was not straight but now it's fixed and I haven't had a cold for a long while," he said today.

After surgery on his nose late last year and a foot injury Medvedev dropped from sixth to 15th in the world rankings.

The 12th-seeded Medvedev needed only two breaks early in each set to dismiss a hapless Berasategui, a shadow of the player who reached the French Open final two years ago, 6-4, 6-4.

It was a nice comeback for the world number 15 who bowed out in the first round last year to Richard Fromberg in bizarre circumstances as he was defending his title on the Monte Carlo clay.

Then, he wandered aimlessly around the court, suffering with what he called "low blood pressure" — one of many health problems which have

affected the 22-year-old Ukrainian since his professional debut.

Michael Chang, direct from Tokyo is third seeded and Becker, still fighting a lingering bronchitis, is fourth. Becker has not played a tournament since February although he was on the doubles team for Germany that lost to France.

Ivanisevic, with a sore neck, is fifth seeded followed by Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Thomas Enqvist and two-time French Open champion Jim Courier follow in the seedings.

The top eight seeds get first round byes and will not be in action until Tuesday or Wednesday. However the quality of the 56-player field is so high Monday's opening round play is highlighted by 1994 champion Andrei Medvedev against French Open finalist that year Alberto Berasategui and Stefan Edberg versus Alex Corretja, who stopped top seed Muster's clay winning streak in last July.

Jancker ready to accept terms

VIENNA, Apr 22: German striker Carsten Jancker is close to signing a new three-year contract with European Cup Winners Cup finalists Rapid Vienna. Australian news agency APA said today, reports Reuter.

Jancker, whose six goals have helped the Vienna club to reach the Cup final against Paris Saint Germain, has agreed in principle to the terms of the 265,400 dollar deal. Rapid president Guenther Kaltenbrunner said.

Army b'ball

Six more Robin League matches of the annual basketball championship of the Bangladeshi Army were held at Mirpur Cantonment on Sunday and Monday, reports UNB.

Air Defence Artillery, Rangpur Area, Mymensingh Area and Chittagong Area won their respective matches.

Meanwhile, Rangpur Area defeated Bogra Area 83-79 and Jessor Area beat Dhaka Engineers 82-71 on Sunday afternoon.

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WC qualifier

Jamaica jolt

Suriname

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The winning shot came from veteran center forward Paul "Tega" Davis, whom the coach substituted for Michael Graham after a goalless first half at Kingston's National Stadium.

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