

Kafelnikov new 'king of clay'

Sports Reporter

Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov clinched his maiden Grand Slam title beating German Michael Stich 7-6, 7-5, 7-6 in the final of the French Open at Roland Garros, according to a BBC sports bulletin monitored here last night.

Earlier, the Russian number-seven joined forces with Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic to beat the experienced fifth seeds Guy Forget of France and Jakob Hlasek of Switzerland 6-2, 6-3.

TODAY'S EURO '96 FIXTURES

Netherlands vs Scotland (Group A)
Venue: Villa Park, Birmingham
Time: 9:30 pm (BST)
 Romania vs France (Group B)
Venue: St James Park, Newcastle
Time: 12:30 am (BST)
Note: All times are Bangladesh Standard Time.



Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov (L) and his Czech partner Daniel Vacek exult with the French Open men's doubles trophy after dismissing Guy Forget and Jakob Hlasek 6-2, 6-3 in the final in Paris on June 8. — AFP/UNB photo

FRENCH OPEN NOTEBOOK

PARIS, June 9 (AP) — French Open women's champion Steffi Graf struggled with her acceptance speech Saturday after being handed her trophy by the French minister of the French Language, Margie Sudres.

"I wanted to speak in French, but I'm quite nervous right now," she said. "So I'm going to try to say thanks. That means a lot to me."

She thought for a second, then said: "I forgot it." But she plunged ahead, after the crowd laughed.

"Je voudrais, no, je voudrais remercier le public par l'encouragement qu'il m'a donné pendant mes quatorze dernières années," she said, thanking the crowd for its support in the 14 years since she began playing at the tournament.

The crowd cheered. "This morning it was better," she apologized.

Jim Courier won the hearts of French fans by doing his act.

Dariusz wins

COLOGNE, Germany, June 9: Unbeaten Dariusz Michalczewski Saturday won a one-sided decision over France's Christophe Girard to retain his WBO light heavyweight title, reports AP.

But Girard gave the Polish-born fighter, who now resides in Germany and is unbeaten in 31 fights, more trouble than the one-sided score indicated.

Some of the 7,000 fans in attendance booed when the scoring of 117-112, 117-11 and 117-112 was announced in favor of Michalczewski.

Girard was able to land combinations in flourishes against the hard-hitting Michalczewski, who had stopped 26 of his 30 opponents early.

Michalczewski, making his sixth title defence, tried to nail the Frenchman with his left hook throughout the fight. The punch had led to 10 second-round knockouts in his career.

But the German only once tagged Girard hard with the punch, forcing the Frenchman to hang on to finish the round after he was staggered late in the 10th.

Michalczewski, 28, had been a heavy favourite against Girard, the WBO's No. 6-ranked challenger who has just seven knockouts in his career.

Michalczewski, weighted 79.2 kilos (174 pounds) for the fight, while Girard was at 78.7 kilos (173 pounds).

Michalczewski explained, his poor performance afterwards by saying he was looking past Girard to his upcoming bout against Graciano Rocchigiani, a former world champion who is popular in Germany.

"I tried to stop thinking about the fight against Rocchigiani, but I'm only human. It was on my mind," said Michalczewski.

Both fighters threw punches non-stop during the fight.

cepance speeches in the language of Voltaire when he won the title in 1991 and '92.

TAKING SIDES: While Graf thanked the crowd for cheering her on in the tough moments of the match, Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario tried not to get too upset about getting less support from the fans.

"I didn't expect it to be that way," she said later. "But even if they were not with me, I always still love them, because I think I always have great matches here."

"I think I proved to myself a lot of things, and I am very happy about it," she said. "The rest is not my problem."

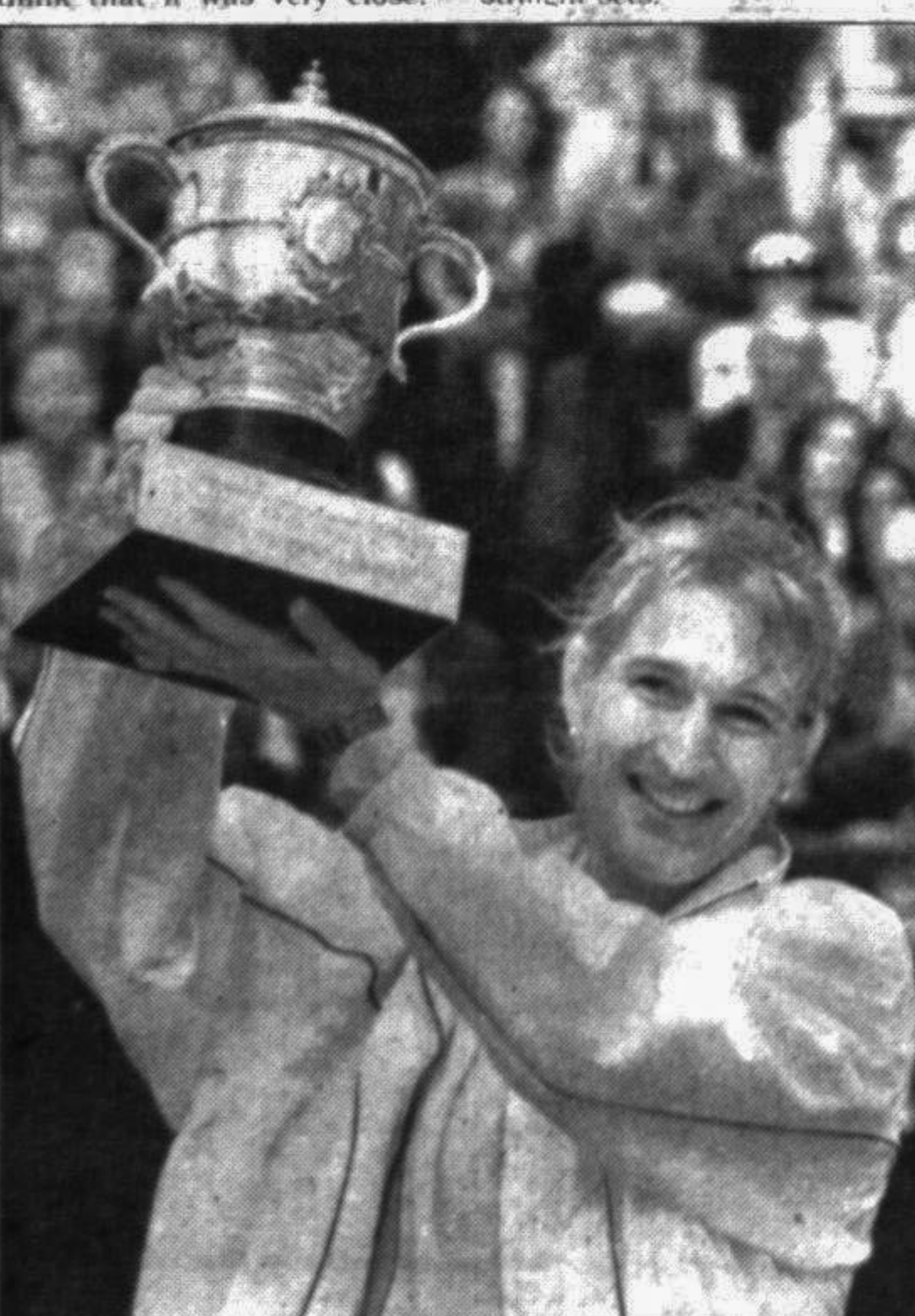
LUCKY HOW MANY TIMES

Known for her reference to "Luck", or lack of it, in her matches, Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario made heavy use of the word after losing the French Open final to Steffi Graf.

She used variations of the word six times during her post-match news conference.

"I think that she was more lucky at the important points," Sanchez-Vicario said of Graf. "I was more unlucky on the specific points and I just have to congratulate her."

"We both played our best game and it came to the points that she was probably a little bit more lucky at the important points," she said. "I just think that it was very close."



KEEP ON SMILING GIRL! Holding high the champions trophy German ace Steffi Graf doesn't hide her happiness after overcoming Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario in the final of the French Open at the Roland Garros in Paris on June 8. — AFP/UNB photo

Hosts swallow Swiss potion

LONDON, June 9: Switzerland spoiled England's opening day celebrations on Saturday when they forced a 1-1 draw against the Euro '96 hosts, reports Reuter.

A controversial penalty decision, converted by Kubilay Turkylmaz seven minutes from time, dashed England's hopes of an initial Group A victory.

England, who took the lead with an Alan Shearer goal after 23 minutes, looked set for maximum points until Spanish referee Manuel Diaz Vega ruled that Stuart Pearce had deliberately handled a close-range shot from Marco Grassi which snatched against the England defender's upraised arm.

Turkylmaz, who had troubled England throughout the match, sent goalkeeper David Seaman the wrong way for the equaliser that decision against England cancelled out the luck they enjoyed for Shearer's goal as both he and Teddy Sheringham looked offside as a through ball from

Paul Ince split the Swiss defence.

Shearer blasted the ball in off goalkeeper Marco Pascolo's near-post to score his first goal for England in 13 matches.

England coach Terry Venables said: "I didn't think it was a penalty but in saying that we didn't play well in the second half."

"It was disappointing — and not the result we were looking for."

After two and a half years of friendly, England seemed slightly overawed at the start of their first competitive match since November 1993.

The Swiss, who came to their first match in the European finals having never won a game in England, had the better of the opening exchanges and found gaps in the England defence twice in the opening 20 minutes.

First, Turkylmaz outpaced skipper Tony Adams but was thwarted by Gary Neville and Gareth Southgate and then the influential Ciriaco Sforza swept the ball high over the bar from a corner.

After 22 minutes England

and, you know, the factor of luck in certain points were more on her side than for me."

MUSTER'S NEXT STEP: Thomas Muster, who has never won a tournament match on grass, will be the top seed at the Queens Club grass-court tournament in London next week.

The tournament, the main warmup for Wimbledon, seeds players based on their world ranking.

Pete Sampras, ranked No. 1 and three-time defending champion at Wimbledon, pulled out of Queens after losing to Yevgeny Kafelnikov in Friday's French Open semifinals.

With Sampras absent, Muster automatically takes over the top seeding since he is ranked No. 2 in the world.

The Austrian's ranking is based mostly on his clay-court success, which includes 16 clay titles over the past year-and-a-half.

Muster has lost in the first round at Wimbledon in his only four appearances. He skipped Wimbledon last year, but said he wants to prove himself on grass this year.

Muster's only victory in a grass-court match came in Australia's Davis Cup tie against South Africa in Johannesburg in February. Muster beat Marcos Ondruska in straight sets.

In the day's other final, Patricia Tarabini and Javier Frana of Argentina won the mixed-doubles crown by beating Nicole Arendt and Luke Jensen of the United States 6-2, 6-2.

The junior men's doubles final saw a home victory when Sebastian Grosjean and Livier Mutis of France saw off Germany's Jan-Ralf Brandt and Daniel Elsner 6-2, 6-3, while the junior women's doubles was won by Italians Alice Canepa and Giulia Casone.

They beat Russia's Anna Kournikova and Ludmilla Varshavskaya of San Marino 6-2, 5-7, 7-5.

Euro '96 roundup

Sports Reporter

1994 World Cup sensation Bulgaria, began their Euro '96 campaign with a 1-1 draw against Spain in a vital Group B encounter at Leeds United's Elland Road ground, according to a BBC sports bulletin monitored here last night.

Prolific marksman Hristo Stoichkov put his side ahead with a penalty. The Spaniards responded through Barjua Sergio's free-kick that took a wicked deflection leaving goalkeeper Dimitar Popov stranded.

At Old Trafford, pre-tournament favourites Germany led the Czech Republic 2-0 with the final whistle only minutes away in their Group C opener.

The Group D match between holders Denmark and Portugal was yet to kick-off.

French Open

Martin, Mauresmo Jr singles champs

PARIS, June 9: Alberto Martin of Spain won the junior men's singles title at the French Open here on Sunday when he defeated Sweden's Bjorn Rehnquist 6-3, 7-6(7/4) in the final, reports AFP.

The 17-year-old Martin, who comes from Barcelona and who is coached by Alvaro Margels, is the third Spaniard to win the junior crown here in the last three years — Roberto Carretero winning in 1993 and Jacobo Diaz twelve months later.

Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta was the 1995 champion. Amelie Mauresmo, who will be 17 next month, won the junior women's singles title when she beat Meghan Shaughnessy of the United States 6-0, 6-4.

It is the second year a French player has won the event. Last year Amelie Cochetux triumphed.

Mauresmo was given a wildcard to play in the senior event and last week defeated Beate Reinsadler of Austria in three sets in the first round before going down in another three-set marathon to eighth seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands.

A quarter-finalist in the junior event at the Australian Open, Mauresmo's progress through the junior draw was far from straight-forward. She had to play tough three-set matches to eliminate Katalin Marosi of Hungary in the second-round, went the distance against Lila Osterloh in the third and had to come back after dropping the first set 1-6 to beat Patty Schnyder of Switzerland in the quarter-finals.

In the day's other final, Patricia Tarabini and Javier Frana of Argentina won the mixed-doubles crown by beating Nicole Arendt and Luke Jensen of the United States 6-2, 6-2.

The junior men's doubles final saw a home victory when Sebastian Grosjean and Livier Mutis of France saw off Germany's Jan-Ralf Brandt and Daniel Elsner 6-2, 6-3, while the junior women's doubles was won by Italians Alice Canepa and Giulia Casone.

They beat Russia's Anna Kournikova and Ludmilla Varshavskaya of San Marino 6-2, 5-7, 7-5.

Spain sweep series

PIETERMARITZBURG, June 9: Spain clinched their three-match series against South Africa with a 2-1 win in the second men's hockey international on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Spain, who won the first Test in the series 4-1 on Friday, were typically quick on the break from defence and opened up a 2-0 lead after 41 minutes with goals from strikers Pol Amat and Xamier Escude.

A much-improved South Africa reduced the deficit to 2-1 in the 45th minute through Shaun Cook and then pressed hard for the equaliser.

Their best chance came in the 52nd minute when Spanish goalkeeper Ramon Jufrasea produced a magnificent save, parrying away a full-blooded short corner strike which was heading for the top right-hand corner.

The two sides meet in the third and final international in Pietermaritzburg today.

Concerned coach

BEIJING, June 9: The coach of Chinese world record holder Wang Junxia has called for a halt to public pressure on the distance runner ahead of the Atlanta Olympics, China's Sports Daily said today, reports Reuter.

Wang, who ran the year's fastest times in the 10,000 and 5,000 metres in trials last month in Nanjing, qualified easily for the Olympics and has raised national hopes of a gold medal, the newspaper said.

But her coach, Mao Dezheng, played down her achievements, saying the results of the Nanjing trials were attributable in part to familiar weather and terrain and a home audience.

"We have not adapted to the weather and temperature in Atlanta and are not clear about the circumstances of our rivals. So you can imagine the pressure on her," he was quoted as saying.

Mao said Wang, who holds the 3,000 metres and 10,000 metres world records, was intensifying her training after the trials.



Kubilay Turkylmaz goes celebrating after sending England custodian David Seaman the wrong way to score the Swiss equaliser during the Euro '96 opener at Wembley on June 8. The match ended 1-1. — AFP/UNB photo

Frenchmen ready to roll



NEWCASTLE, England, June 9: Soaring with confidence after a 23-match winning streak and a bid for soccer revival, France is looking for an opening European Championship victory when it meets Romania Monday, reports AP.

Youri Djorkaeff, a lean and athletic forward, is expected to lead in the France's new spirit and their quest for a top spot in the Group B and his team's main goal: a European title to go with the one led by Michael Platini in 1984.

"First matches at major tournaments are always the toughest," said Djorkaeff, who with 10 goals in 15

decision not to invite England-based stars Eric Cantona and David Ginola into the 22-player roster.

"Djorkaeff and Zidane are among them," said Jacquet. "We're seeing a change of generations, that's clear."

France's starting formation against Romania at St. James Park in Newcastle will be four defenders, led by aggressive anchor Marcel Desailly, in front of whom are three playmakers. Didier Deschamps of Juventus, Christian Karembeu of Sampdoria and Vincent Guerin of Paris St. Germain.

Djorkaeff, who recently moved from St. Germain to Inter in Italy, and Zidane are expected to create the chances for each other and their teammates.

"We have a powerful team. That's not the question. But Romanians are dangerous and hard to beat, as they have shown at the last World Cup," said Jacquet.

Romania and France played in the same qualification group for the Euro '96. France beat Romania 3-1 in France and tied 0-0 in Romania. But the Romanians ended up at the top of the standings.

As at the World Cup when they reached the quarter-finals, Romanians are led by skillful 31-year-old midfielder Gheorghe Hagi, who had a mediocre last season in Barcelona.

It was much the same for him before the World Cup when he played club soccer in Italy. But in the US he shone and was proclaimed one of the best players at the tournament.

"I won't say I wouldn't like the history to repeat itself, but the team's overall performance is much more important," said Hagi, whose left foot can outwit any opponent and threatened any goalkeeper.

"The match against France will be our major test," he added.

Euro '96 in English vest



LONDON, June 9: A pageant of old England and the big names of modern English soccer kicked off the European Championship as 'football came home' in front of 70,000 fans at Wembley Stadium on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The 45-minute ceremony before the opening match between England and Switzerland was under-stated compared with many, including that of the 1994 World Cup.

It concentrated on soccer as a source of enjoyment and peaceful passion throughout Europe.

England's patron Saint George killed a dragon, breathing fire and smoke but displaying a weak defence on the hallowed turf.

Three hundred young dancers showed what innocent fun the English had in the middle ages when a good war used up the aggression now expended on hooliganism.

One of the medieval knights involved in a touch-line jousting competition was injured when his horse slipped and fell over, catapulting his rider into a barrier. He was treated by paramedics before being carried away.

The Charlton brothers, Bobby and Jack, were the stars of a soccer carnival which reminded older members of the crowd of the biggest day in English soccer — the 1966 World Cup victory.

Euro '96 organisers, whose tournament motto is 'football comes home' have been attacked for exploiting the World Cup victory but not inviting the surviving members of the 1966 team and their manager Sir Alf Ramsey.

Sir Stanley Matthews unveiled a huge replica of the prize at state over the next three weeks, the Henri de Launay trophy.

Four members of the Red Devils — not to be confused with the Manchester United team of the same nickname — parachuted into the stadium. The skydivers carrying the Swiss, Scottish and German flags were roundly booed by English fans.

The Euro '96 theme song "we're in this together" was

sung by Simply Red's Mick Hucknall, heralding the arrival of eight boys carrying soccer balls.

Thomas Ince, son of England midfielder Paul Ince, brought on the opening match's ball accompanied by Kasper, son of goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel and Nickolai, son of Brian Laudrup.

The two boys handed back the European trophy which had been Denmark's for the four years since they won it in Sweden.

The tournament was then officially opened by the Duke of Kent, a cousin of Queen Elizabeth, as 40,000 balloons were released into the London sky.

SO CLOSE, YET SO FAR: Spain's gritty world No 3 Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario wipes away tears as she holds the runners-up trophy of the French Open championships. Sanchez-Vicario lost to world no one Steffi Graf in the final in Paris on June 8. — AFP/UNB photo

Mexico beat Bolivia

DALLAS, June 9: Luis Garcia interrupted a poor pass at the top of Bolivia's penalty area and beat Bolivian goalkeeper Mauricio Soria to the near post to lead Mexico to a 1-0 victory in the opening game of the US Cup soccer tournament on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The Mexicans made better use of the wings than Bolivia and played most of the balls through talented central midfielder Manuel Sol. The Bolivians favoured attacking up the middle.

Mexico kept its defence compact and swarmed Marco Etcheverry whenever the Bolivian playmaker came near the ball.

The Bolivians, who have established a reputation lately as troublesome at home but quite pedestrian away from the high altitude of the Andes mountains were most dangerous on the dribbling of Julio Baldovino.

The more crafty Mexicans hit the post twice, and Garcia, who had two goals at the World Cup USA '94, missed two clear chances in the 59th and 64th minutes.

Hamed's humdinger

NEW CASTLE, England, June 9: Britain's flashy World Boxing Organisation featherweight champion Prince Naseem Hamed retained his title by surviving a first round knockdown to knock out Puerto Rican challenger Daniel Alcala in the second round on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Hamed, who now hopes to be himself in the United States and fight the other world champions at his weight, was floored for the first time in his 22-fight pro career by Alcala late in the opening round.

But he turned on the power in the second round to floor the 23-year-old challenger twice, the second time with his head crashing against the canvas as the bout ended at 2:46 of the round.

It was a typically sensational finish by Hamed, who had been clipped a couple of times before Alcala landed a short, crisp right to the chin which sent him onto the seat of his pants.

was up at two, unhurt, and proceeded to take control of the bout by abandoning his flamboyant approach to box in more orthodox fashion before recording his 20th stoppage.

A right hand to the jaw followed by a numbing left hook was the first combination on floor the Puerto Rican. Alcala pulled himself up at four and staggered into a neutral corner where Hamed decked him again with another combination. This time the referee did not bother to count as Alcala lay flat on his back.

Hamed, 22, said of the punch that floored him: "I didn't even see that shot but I got up and I knew where my feet were and I was just too strong."

"It was nice to take a good shot from a very good fighter like that and win. I just planted my feet and I hit him so hard. It was perfect, beautiful... boo, boom."

But Naseem, who was making his second defence, added: "I didn't look as good as I could have done. I never, never get hit usually. I could have boxed better than that."

Liles retains title

NEWCASTLE, England, June 9: Frankie Liles kept his WBA super-middleweight title Saturday, winning in a third-round technical knockout over friend and fellow American Tim Littles, reports AP.

A fight predicted to be dull — a cautious event between opponents who know each other well — was anything but. Liles, a left-hander who came in at 167 1/4 pounds (76 kilos) — knocked Littles down three times.

Fighting at 167 pounds (75.9 kilos), Littles responded and put Liles on the mat in the third round as he seemed to be taking the momentum away from the champion.

The winning blow came in the final seconds of the third round when Liles hit Littles with a short right-hand hook that sent the contender sprawling. The fight was stopped at 2:58.

With his successful fourth defence, Liles' record improved to 28-1 with 18 knockouts. Littles fell to 27-2 with 18 knockouts. Littles, who roomed with Liles as an amateur, is the only man to beat the champion as professional.

In the first round, Liles put Littles down with two rights and a left. The knockdown came just short of the two-minute mark. Seconds later, the bell judge signalled the end of the round, a mistake that Liles' corner protested to no avail.

In the second round, Littles picked up a cut over his left eye early in the round and seemed on his way to being finished off when he was dropped a second time with only 15 seconds left in the round.

In the third, Littles exploded and ripped Liles with three overhead rights that sent the champion tumbling into the ropes. He was on the defensive the next two minutes until he popped the winning right hand.