

Sport

Kohl lauds Vogts

BONN, June 28: Chancellor Helmut Kohl on Thursday congratulated national coach Berti Vogts on Germany's semifinal victory over England in the European Championship and praised the game as an advertisement for soccer.

"I'm pleased for the team and above all for Berti Vogts," Kohl told Reuters as he walked to a parliamentary debate in Bonn. "This is a success for him."

Kohl, a keen soccer fan who regularly speaks to Vogts by telephone, said Germany now had a good chance of winning the final against the Czech Republic on Sunday.

He said Wednesday's semifinal was "one of the best games, if not the very best, that I've seen in these European Championships, especially in extra time."

"It was a super game and an advertisement for soccer."

"It was a fair game and it pleased me particularly that there were none of the feared tensions between German and English fans," Kohl added.

Romario not in Zagalo's plans

RIO DE JANEIRO, June 28: Bebeto is going to Atlanta, but Romario is not.

Romario, the star of the 1994 World Cup, was the most notable absence from the list of 18 players named Thursday to Brazil's soccer team for the Summer Olympics, reports AP.

Coach Mario Zagalo had made it clear that he would not take both Romario and Bebeto. Each team is allowed only three players over 23, and the two strikers are over the age limit.

Romario, voted the world's best player in 1994, was hurt by erratic play and an attitude problem. While Bebeto was a model of good behavior on and off the field, Romario was accused of laziness and making obscene gestures at fans.

An abundance of good young strikers also made Romario dispensable. Aside from Bebeto, Zagalo named Savio, Luizao and Ronald — a World Cup veteran at 20, Cajo, an all-star forward from Italy's Internazionale, didn't make the list.

Zagalo named four players from foreign clubs: Ronaldo, of PSV Eindhoven; Juninho, of Middlesbrough; Aldair, of Roma, and Roberto Carlos of Internazionale.

Besides Romario, the only question mark was at the second fullback slot, next to World Cup veteran Aldair. Narciso and Ronaldo will compete for that berth.

The roster included four players from São Paulo state champion Palmeiras: Flávio Conceição, Amaral, Rivaldo and Luizao. Zagalo calls versatile midfielder-attacker Rivaldo, the third player over 23, the best player in activity in Brazil.

The coach also named four players to a back-up squad in case of injuries: goalie Rogério, defender André Cruz, midfielder Marcelinho Paulista and forward Giovanni.

The Olympic gold medal is the only major soccer prize Brazil has never won.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Dida, Danrlei.

DEFENDERS: Ze Maria, André Luis, Roberto Carlos, Aldair, Ronaldo, Narciso.

MIDFIELDERS: Flávio Conceição, Ze Elias, Amaral, Juninho, Rivaldo, Beto.

FORWARDS: Bebeto, Savio, Luizao, Ronaldo.

Euro style fails to impress 'the king'

LONDON, June 28: Pele declared European football was very defensive from what he had seen at Euro '96 in a lunch with journalists at Hyde Park hotel here on Thursday, reports AFP.

The Brazilian sports minister said: "The system of almost all the teams is a 5-4-1 where it is very difficult to score goals."

But on the England-Germany semifinal he had words of praise for Terry Venables' England saying they deserved victory — although Germany eventually went through to the final 6-5 on penalties following a 1-1 draw.

Of the English players, he liked Paul Gascoigne and Paul Ince but he believed Steve McManaman was not used to full advantage.

"McManaman is a great player," said Pele. "But I don't think he lays in the correct position. It would be better to use him as a playmaker in the middle of the pitch rather than putting him on the flank."

He added Gascoigne and Andreas Möller were the two best players on the field in that dramatic match.

Flavel's feat

LONDON, June 28: New Zealand's Kirsty Flavel made the highest ever score in women's cricket on Thursday, hitting 284 against England in the first Test at Scarborough, reports Reuters.

Flavel, 28, overtook Australian Denise Annett's previous world best of 193 made against England in August 1987.

New Zealand, replying to England's 414, finished the final day's play at 517 for eight as the match ended in a draw.

Vogts' men on familiar ground



LONDON, June 28 (AP): Two-time European champions, the Germans have so far confirmed their stamina and ability to stay cool in penalty shootouts. Now they aim to show why they should be regarded as the best team in the continent winning the title for the third time.

"I've always believed in my team. Only as a team are we strong, we've proved this once again," coach Berti Vogts said after Germany beat hosts England in a penalty shootout Wednesday night at Wembley.

The final against the Czech Republic Sunday at Wembley will give Vogts a chance to win his first major title since taking over as coach in 1990.

The final comes 20 years after the Germans lost their last penalty shootout — against what was then Czechoslovakia, who won the European title in 1976 in Belgrade.

Vogts and two of his coaching staff, Rainer Bonhof and Sepp Maier, were on that losing team in the final. The Czechoslovak victory prevented a three-run German sweep, Germany won in 1972 and 1980 and will be playing their fifth final after losing 2-0 to Denmark in Sweden four years ago.

Since no German team has lost a penalty shootout since that 76 loss, Vogts and his colleagues should be in good shape to get a measure of revenge if they beat the Czechs.

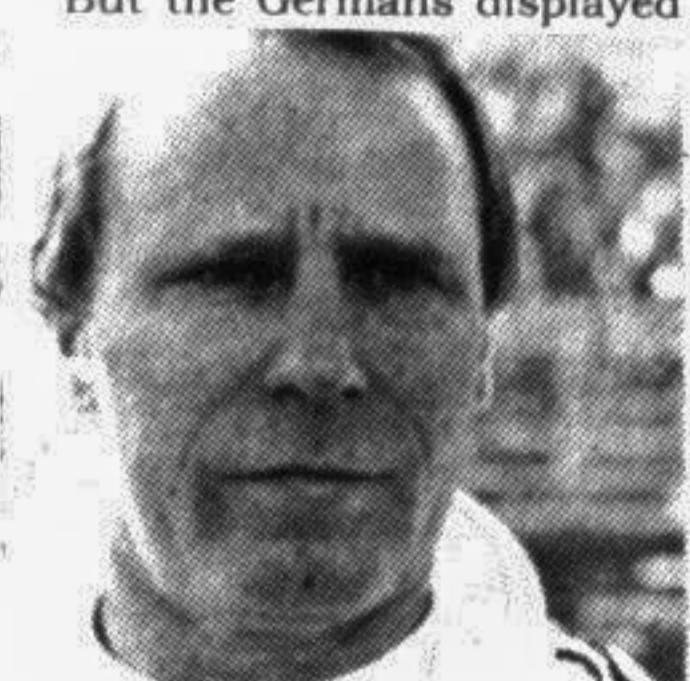
"It will be damn hard," Vogts said. "The Czechs have not surprised me by reaching the final. I had been laughed at but I always know how difficult it would be to play against them."

"We will be without several players and the final will be very hard for us. The Czechs will have everybody back after suspensions."

Defender Stefan Reuter and midfielder Andreas Möller, who notched the winning penalty against England, will be out after collecting second yellow cards in the semifinal.

Star striker and captain Jürgen Klinsmann is more than doubtful after missing the England game with a torn calf muscle, and key central defender Thomas Helmer also limped off the pitch Wednesday after aggravating a knee injury.

Germany convincingly beat the Czech Republic 2-0 in their opening Euro '96 game, confirming the nation's status as No. 1 favourite in the eyes of British bookmakers.



BERTI VOGTS

more composure against England at Wembley and rallied quickly after conceding a third-minute goal to Alan Shearer. Stefan Kuntz struck back in the 16th and the deadlock remained until the thrilling finish.

"My team has shown true character. I must congratulate them," Vogts said.

Before leaving for England, Vogts proclaimed that the team's main goal was "to display nice soccer" and that winning the title was only of

secondary importance. But the Germans then struggled to a 2-1 victory over Russia, luckily survived Italy in a 0-0 draw and again had fortune on its side in a 2-1 quarterfinal win over Croatia.

In the process, they showed a lot of their traditional discipline and organisation, but little flair that Vogts has been seeking to install in the team.

But the Germans displayed

Bookmakers back Brazil

LONDON, June 28: World Cup holders Brazil are 4-1 favourites to win the 1998 World Cup with host country France at 5-1. British bookmakers Ladbrokes said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Germany, who contest the European Championship final on Sunday, were quoted at 6-1. Argentina are 7-1 as are Italy, beaten on penalties by Brazil in the 1994 World Cup final.

England's odds were cut to 16-1 from 20-1 after their European Championship semifinal defeat by Germany. The Czech Republic who beat France in the other semifinals are quoted at 50-1, along with Denmark.

Nemecek wants it in normal time

ST ALBANS, England, June 28: Czech team captain Vaclav Nemecek insists his side can beat Germany in Sunday's Euro '96 final without having to rely on another penalty shoot-out.

Four of the six games so far in the knock-out stages of the tournament have had to be settled from the sport and the Czechs have shown themselves to be a notably tight defensive outfit.

But Nemecek, set to win his 60th international cap in a career which has also included spells in France and Switzerland, is confident his men can emulate the Czechoslovakia side of 1976 by lifting the title.

"A shoot-out is one of the possibilities, but I don't think it will happen this time. I think this final will end in 90 minutes," said Nemecek, still recovering from Wednesday's tense sudden-death win over France.

"We have the same chance as the Germans to win, although they are big favourites because they have so much experience. We must stay serious and stay compact like we did against France."

Given recent events, Czechoslovakia's shoot-out success against their world champions Germany 20 years ago could scarcely be more ironic. Antonin Panenka's chip over Sepp Maier for the winning goal in Belgrade remains arguably the finest televised moment in his country's sporting history.

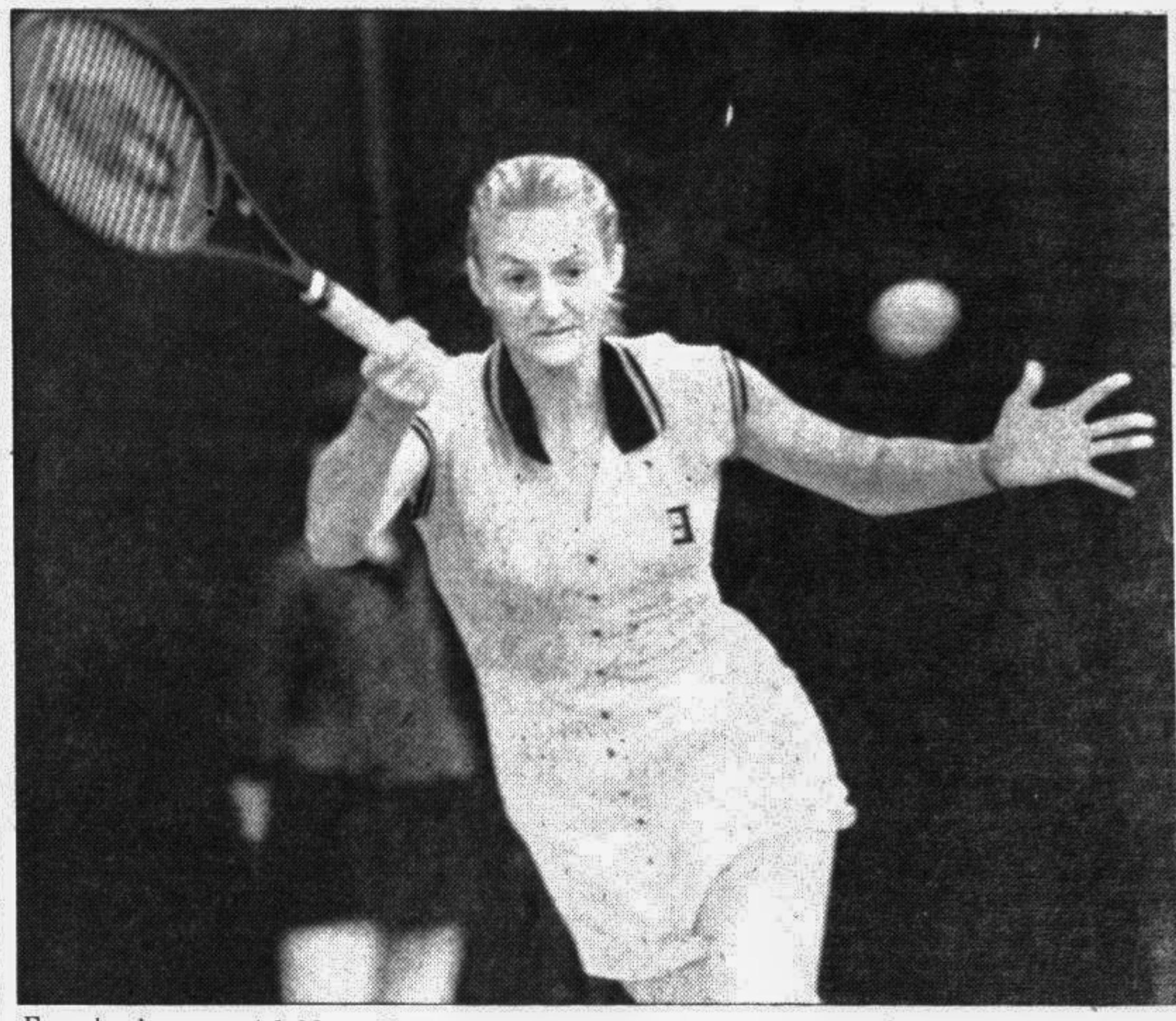
The 30-year-old Edberg, who is retiring at the end of the year, sat slumped in his chair for more than a minute as the crowd gave him a standing ovation. He showed little emotion as he waved and walked off for the last time.

Edberg was Wimbledon champion in 1988 and 1990, and runner-up in 1989. It was ironic that he lost his last match to a man playing Wimbledon for the first time.

"I'm playing my last, he's playing his first," Edberg said. "Maybe he's taking over in my steps. I'm not sure."

The loss came on the same court where Edberg won the Wimbledon junior title in 1983.

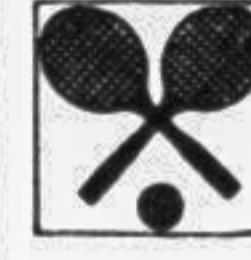
"He was on a high today,"



French glamour girl Mary Pierce makes a forehand return against Briton Claire Taylor during their second round encounter at the Wimbledon Championships on June 27. Pierce won 6-4, 6-4.

— AFP/UNB photo

Solemn Stefan's silent adieu



WIMBLEDON.

June 28 (AP): Facing match point, Stefan Edberg chipped and charred the way he's done countless times over the years.

But his backhand return went into the net, bringing Edberg's 14-year Wimbledon career to a close with a second-round upset defeat Thursday.

"It's a tough one, but it has to end at some point," the former two-time champion said after bowing out to fellow Swede Mikael Tillstrom. "You have to hold your head up. It's not the end of the world."

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Edberg was Wimbledon champion in 1988 and 1990, and runner-up in 1989. It was ironic that he lost his last match to a man playing Wimbledon for the first time.

"I would say it's 50-50," he said. "I really don't know at this stage how I would feel coming here. Maybe it's better for me to stay away and watch from a distance, but it might be nice to be here at the same time."

In any case, Edberg knows he can get in to the All-England Club whenever he wants.

"Once you've been a champion here, you should leave like one, too, and remember that you're always welcome to come to this club," he said.

"You're a member here. You belong to this club. It's not like I'm not coming back again. So that's the great thing about it."

— STEFAN EDBERG

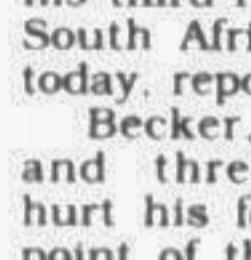
Wimbledon warmup tournament at Queen's.

But Edberg was below par

Thursday, while the 59th-ranked Tillstrom played the best match of his career on grass.

"He was on a high today."

Injury bothers Becker



LONDON, June 28:

Boris Becker officially took over from Terry Venables as England coach Friday and said he was pleased to be taking over a team which was on the upswing, reports AP.

Venables made his exit after England's European Championship semifinal loss to Germany Wednesday and Hoddle withdrew from Wimbledon with an injury to his right arm sustained in the first set tie-break of his third-round match against South African Neville Godwin today, reports Reuters.

Terry Venables has done a magnificent job," Hoddle said. "It would have been nice to have gone one step further and won the tournament, but it wasn't to be."

"But it's been a great experience for all the players and for me it's a good time to take over. English football is further up the ladder after Euro '96."

"We always thought we had the right players and we just needed the right system to go with it. Terry has got to take a lot of credit for what has been achieved."

Hoddle, who took the job after being player-manager of Swindon and then Chelsea, is known to have his own style of coaching. He will continue the transformation from the predictable, unimaginative style of play three years ago under Graham Taylor to a more mobile system where players from all parts of the team are encouraged to get forward.

His forward-thinking style attracted Dutch star Ruud Gullit to Chelsea last season and the former AC Milan striker has now taken over as the team's manager.

Earlier, the start of play was delayed by rain for 75 minutes before Venables, whose 5-5, 5-7, 6-4 victory over second seed and joint number one Seles on Wednesday was as much a shock as Flach's over Agassi earlier, defeated Belgian Dominique van Roost 6-3, 6-2.

Doubles expert Gigi Fernandez, a surprising semifinalist two years ago needed on-court back treatment as she lay flat on her stomach in the second set of her match with Austrian Judith Weissen, which she surprisingly lost 6-2, 7-5.

But Fernandez's name sake Mary Joe, the ninth seed, crushed Argentina's Florencia Labat 6-2, 6-0 to take her appointed place in the fourth round.

American Malvina Washington, who upset men's ninth seed Thomas Enqvist in the second round, also reached the fourth round with a 6-3, 6-3, 6-0 win over Bohdan Ulrich of the Czech Republic.

On Thursday, sentimental favourite Stefan Edberg bowed out of his last Wimbledon on Thursday, just one match short of his 100th win on grass and his 50th at the Championships.

Detectors are questioning a 39-year-old man in connection with the incident.

There may have been others involved, but there is nothing to suggest at this stage that it was connected with the football.

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Despite a slight limp in the

second set from an injured knee, Graf completed a brisk 7-5, 6-3 victory over Italy's Nathalie Baudoin.

Graf, who pulled out of the Eastbourne tournament last week because of the injury, said she just had to live with the problem.

"It has not been great but it's not been bad either," she said.

Five of the German squared who beat England in a penalty shoot-out in the semifinal of the European Soccer Championship on Wednesday watched Graf win.

She said she had followed their agonising close tie of television. "There were lots of screams in our house and we were pretty exhausted afterwards," she said.

Michael Stich of Germany, champion here in 1991 and runner-up at this year's French Open, also went through, beating Shuzo Matsuoka of Japan 7-6, 6-4, 6-7, 6-1 in London's gathering gloom.

Date uneasy on grass!



LONDON, June 28: