

Wimbledon results

LONDON, July 6 (AP): Following are summarised Wimbledon results: **Women's doubles quarterfinal:** Gigi Fernandez, United States, and Natasha Zvereva (2), Belarus, def. Yayuk Basuki, Indonesia, and Caroline Vis (12), Netherlands, 6-1, 6-4.

Boys' singles quarterfinal: Peter Wessels, Netherlands, def. Paradorn Srichaphan, Thailand, 6-4, 6-4.

Mixed doubles (3rd round): Cyril Suk, Czech Republic, and Helena Sukova (7), Czech Republic, def. David MacPherson, Australia, and Rachel McQuillan, Australia, 6-1, 4-6, 6-3.

Boys' singles quarterfinal: Ivan Ljubicic, Croatia, def. Martin Lee, Britain, 7-5, 6-4.

Doubles (2nd round): Yves Allegro, Switzerland, and Jan-Michel Pequery, France, def. Amir Hadad, Israel, and Harel Levy, Israel, 6-3, 7-6 (7-4).

A tinge of trivia!

LONDON, July 6: Around 2,000 of Wimbledon's supply of 5,000 towels for use by players at the tournament have gone missing, it was reported on Friday, says Reuter.

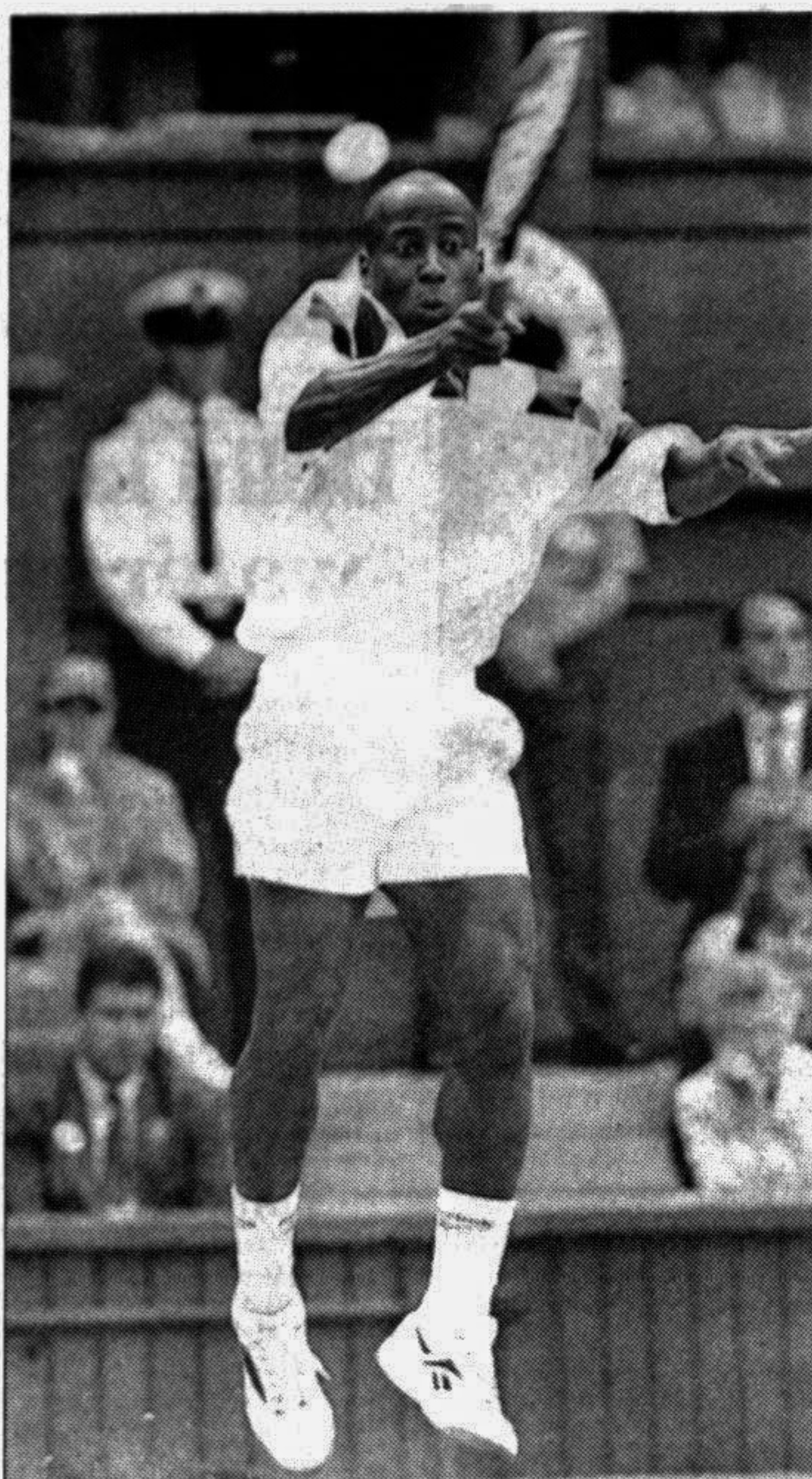
A spokesman for initial UK, which supplies the towels to the All-England Club, said many had been taken as mementos by players.

"Quite a lot of the towels go home with the famous players," the spokesman said. "They like to keep them as souvenirs because they have the year of the championship on them."

"We don't want to encourage them to take them away, but we understand because they are so nice."

An All-England Club spokesman commented: "It's the same the world over. It happens at every major tennis tournament."

The towels, made of 100 per cent cotton, are in All-England Club purple and green for men and powder blue and yellow for women.



Unheralded American Malivai Washington leaps in the air to negotiate a back-hand slice shot against compatriot Todd Martin during their semifinals at Wimbledon on July 6. Malivai kept his giant-killing campaign by inflicting 5-7, 6-4, 6-7 (6-8), 10-8 defeat on Martin.

Sport

Last nail in seeds' coffin



LONDON, July 6: Two unseeded players will contest Sunday's Wimbledon men's final, the first in the history of the All-England Club.

American Malivai Washington and Dutchman Richard Krajicek had contrasting semifinal victories on Saturday, report agencies.

Todd Martin suffered the biggest Centre Court collapse since Jana Novotna in 1993 to give fellow Washington a helping hand towards his first final.

Washington, who twice came from a set down before the match was halted by rain on Friday, trailed 1-5 and a controversial line call in the decisive fifth set before staging an extraordinary fightback which earned him a 5-7, 6-4, 6-7, 6-3, 10-8 victory in three hours 49 minutes.

It enabled Washington, 27, to become the first black player to reach a Wimbledon men's final since Arthur Ashe in 1975, and it may take Martin at least two decades to recover from his crushing disappointment.

Krajicek, the 24-year-old Dutchman, who put out defending champion Pete Sampras in the previous round, slammed down another 15 aces to blast Australian Jason Stoltenberg off the No 1 Show Court 7-5, 6-2, 6-1.

He now tops the ace count with 133 since the tournament began.

Washington's victory over Martin, the 13th seed, ensures that Wimbledon will have its first unseeded champion since Boris Becker in 1985.

The Washington-Martin match, which was suspended by rain for the fourth time at two sets apiece Friday, ended 25 hours after it began following 3:49 of actual playing time.

After Washington hit a high backhand volley for a cross-court winner on his first match point, he dropped to both knees, clenched both fists and looked towards his friends and family in the players' box.

There were distinct echoes of Novotna's tearful loss to Steffi Graf in the women's final three years ago, and Martin's parents in the players' box looked understandably devastated at the two friends and Davis Cup teammates embraced at the net.

But Washington, ranked 20th in the world, deserved his victory.

"You work hard for moments like this," Washington said. "You just want to seize the opportunity when it's in your reach. I could see it. When I was down 5-1, it looked like it was running the other way. I'm just glad I was able to catch up with it."

Washington was 6 years old when Ashe won Wimbledon. "I'm sure I'll get a good reception when I get back home," he said. "I have a lot of support from the black community in the States and around the world ... It's an honour to be the first black man Arthur to be in a Slam final."

Martin, who played tentatively on many big points, said he never felt tighter during a tennis match.

"I froze up a little bit and Mal played well when he needed to," he said. "It's a game I've practiced a lot of times but I've never felt a feeling like today."

While there was little suspense during Friday's four sets Saturday's fifth set was full of drama.

Martin raced out to a 5-1 lead but couldn't convert. Twice he served for the match and both times Washington broke him and eventually evened the set at 6-6.

With no tiebreaker in the fifth set, controversy arose with Martin serving in the 13th game.

Martin saved two break points before serving what appeared to be his 11th double fault that would give Washington a third chance to break.

The electronic - called "cyclops" - didn't beep on the second serve, which seemed on television replays to land slightly long. The line judge signaled the ball out.

Washington believed he would the point and Martin thought he had.

Martin marched over to French chair umpire Bruno Rebeuh and said, "The cyclops, C'mon."

The line judge got out of his seat and went over to Rebeuh, explaining that he overruled the cyclops. Washington came over, and the discussion centered on whether the ball landed beyond the range of the cyclops.

Rebeuh ruled in favour of Martin that since the cyclops didn't beep it wasn't a double fault. Rebeuh is one of the most experienced umpires, but also among the most controversial. He was embroiled in a flap last year that led to Jeff Tarango's default.

"You can't do that," Washington argued. "If you're going to overrule and say the ball is out, OK we play two. But you're not even doing that. You didn't overrule. Are we just playing on for the hell of it? He saw it out, but you're not overruling him?"

Just at that moment, the first rain since the match had resumed began to fall lightly.

Martin then served an ace, his 23rd, down the middle which Washington barely moved for. On the next point, a still-rattled Washington stubbed a backhand wide to fall behind again 7-6.

As the players sat down on the changeover, Washington, usually one of the most mild-mannered players on the tour, responded to a comment from Rebeuh, saying, "You didn't overrule it. Don't talk that crap to me. That's b.s."

The rain picked up, sending the players off the court while it was covered.

After a 35-minute interruption, a more composed Washington came out and held serve at love, capping the game with an overhead smash, to level the set at 7-7.

After both players held easily in the next two games, Washington got the decisive break in the 17th game. Martin saved three break points before serving his 11th double fault to give Washington a fourth chance. This time, Martin netted a forehand volley to give Washington a 9-8 lead.

Serving for the match, Washington fell behind 0-30 before winning four straight points to close out the contest.

"Obviously his victory is something the whole black community can cherish and I think that's exciting."

Martin, who went off the boil after surging 5-1 clear when the final set resumed on Saturday, admitted: "I obviously froze a little bit, but Mal played well when he needed to."

Asked what he thought about Washington becoming the first black American since Arthur Ashe to reach the final Martin replied: "It's got to be a great feeling to be in the finals at Wimbledon - whether you're black, white, brown or green."

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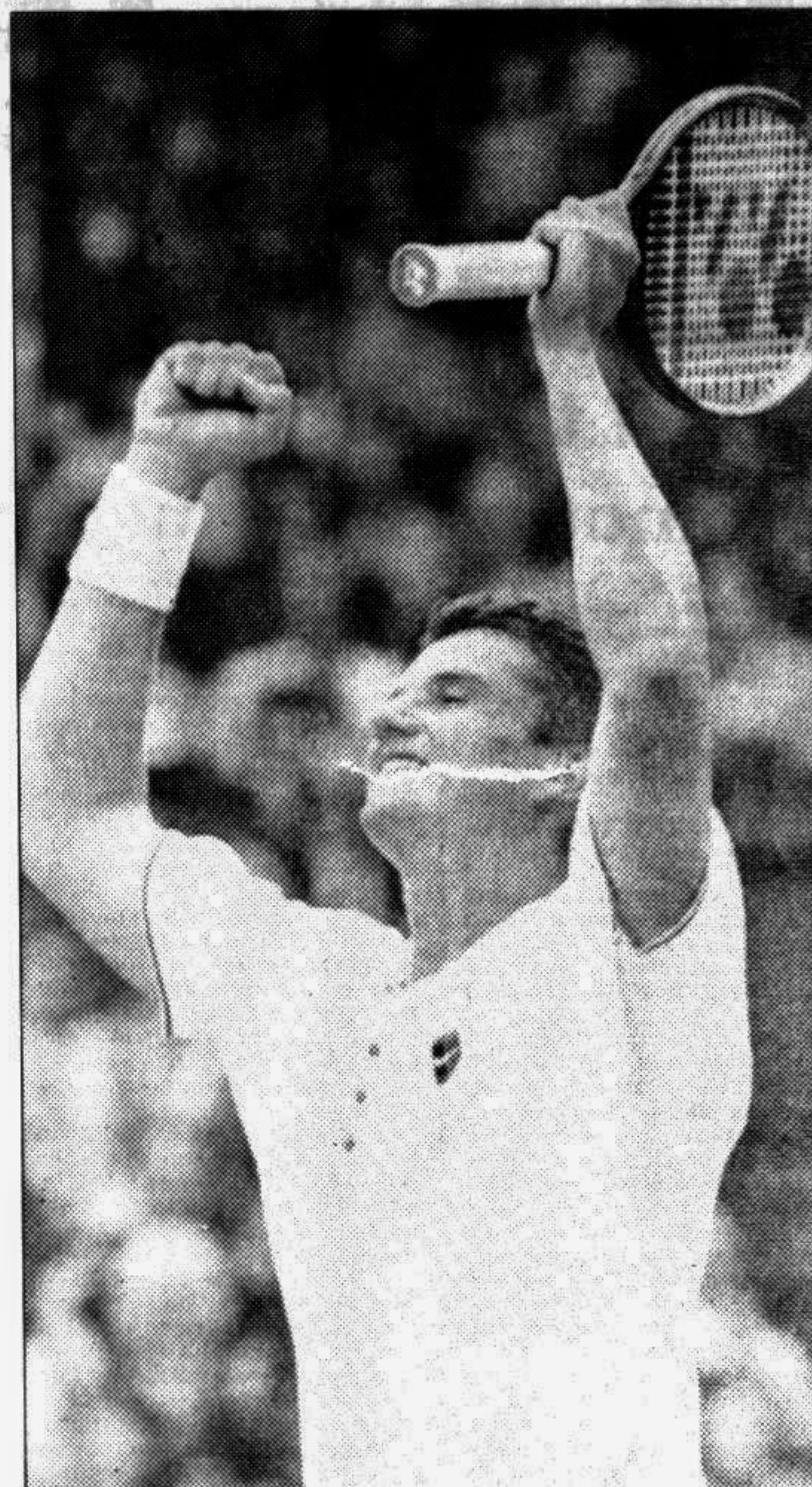
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Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands sets up Sunday's final showdown with Malivai Washington, beating Australian Jason Stoltenberg 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 in the semifinals at Wimbledon yesterday.

Martin being a graceful loser

LONDON, July 6: Todd Martin, dignified in defeat, wished his opponent and 'friendly neighbour' Malivai Washington the best of luck in his bid to become the first black American to win Wimbledon in 21 years after crashing to a five-set defeat in the semifinals on Saturday, reports AFP.

The 13th-seeded Martin, finally beaten 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (8/6), 3/6, 8-10, recently moved into a new house close to Washington's home in Florida.

"After this he'd better throw me a house-warming party," grinned the 25-year-old Martin, the last of the men's seeds at the championship.

Martin, who went off the boil after surging 5-1 clear when the final set resumed on Saturday, admitted: "I obviously froze a little bit, but Mal played well when he needed to."

Asked what he thought about Washington becoming the first black American since Arthur Ashe to reach the final Martin replied: "It's got to be a great feeling to be in the finals at Wimbledon - whether you're black, white, brown or green."

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Frankie jolts Johnson

OSLO, July 6: Frankie Fredericks of Namibia handed American Michael Johnson his first defeat in any race for two years when he controversially won their 200 metres showdown at the Bislett Games on Friday, reports Reuter.

Fredericks, who is likely to battle with Johnson for the Olympic gold in Atlanta later this month, appeared to get a flying start on his way to winning in 19.82 seconds - his fastest ever time.

Johnson, the world champion, who set a world record of 19.66 on June 23, had to be content with second place in 19.85.

Johnson had won 21 successive 200 metres races since his last defeat in Lausanne on July 6, 1994 - when he finished fourth behind Fredericks - and he had not been beaten at either 200 or 400 metres since then.

But TV replays seemed to suggest that Fredericks went too early.

He had build such a substantial lead by the end of the bend that not even Johnson could close it, although he came back strongly over the final few metres.

Even if he did get away to a false or flying start, Fredericks' performance confirmed he is in the form of his life following his 9.86 run in the 100 metres in Lausanne on Wednesday when he was just 0.01 seconds outside the world record.

While Johnson has looked favourite for a unique 200-400 double in Atlanta, Fredericks could well win the 100 and challenge Johnson all the way in the 200 if he decides to run both sprints.

Later, both athletes maintained a diplomatic stance about the start.

Fredericks said: "I just wanted to make sure I got a good start and that's what happened. I was concentrating hard. I was relaxed and held Michael off."

Johnson said: "All I know is that I got a bad start and that decided it."

In all Johnson had run 38

aces over his two specialist distances without defeat until Friday.

As expected the race was the highlight of the meeting held on a cold, windy evening with the crowd and athletes periodically drenched by the showers.

While Fredericks edged home in the 200, American Dennis Mitchell also had a narrow victory in the 100.

Mitchell, who won the US Olympic trials in 9.92 seconds last month but finished last in a high-quality field in Lausanne on Wednesday, clocked 10.10 running into a headwind to just beat compatriot Tim Harden, second in 10.11.

Jamaican Merlene Ottey, the world 200 champion, got the better of her old rival Gwen Torrence, the Olympic 200 champion, in the women's 100 metres, with Ottey winning in 10.95 and Torrence finishing third in 11.06.

American newcomer Inger Miller, likely to be in the sprint relay squad in Atlanta, was second in 10.98.

Meanwhile, Margaret Crowley underlined her credentials, beating the Australian record by six seconds and finishing third in 4:01.34, ahead of former world 800 metres champion Maria Mutola of Mozambique.

Paul Bitok of Kenya was also involved in a tough battle for supremacy in the 3,000 with new Moroccan hopeful Salah Hissou.

Both men ran faster than anyone else this year to finish first and second in 7:29.55 and 7:30.46 respectively.

Only a strong tailwind denied Ludmila Engquist a world's best legal time of 12.48 seconds in the women's 100 hurdles.

The former Lyudmila Narozhnienko of the Soviet Union, a Swedish citizen since June 20, looked in blistering form and could repeat her 1991 world championship winning performance for her new country at Atlanta.

Ribeiro and Romania's Gabriela Szabo were engaged in a thrilling duel over the last lap with Ribeiro overtaking Sz-

abo 50 metres from the line to win in 14 minutes 41.07 seconds. Szabo clocked 14:41.12, the fourth fastest ever.

Multi-world record holder Algerian Noureddine Morceli won Bislett's famous dream mile, back on the agenda after being cancelled last year but upstaged by the sprints. In three minutes 48.15 seconds, the fastest time in the world this year.

He was paced by his brother Ali, and fellow Algerian Abdelvivi Benzaï and finished well clear of Olympic 1,500 metres champion Fermin Cacho of Spain, who was second in 3:49.56.

Wilson Kiketer, the former Kenyan who now runs for Denmark, improved on his own 1996 800 world best of 1:43.13 with a dynamic finish to win in 1:42.76.

There was also an impressive performance from Ireland's 5,000 metres world champion Sonia O'Sullivan who won the 1,500 in a season's best time of 3:59.91, edging out Britain's Kelly Holmes (4:01.13) who is likely to decide after running the 1,500 in Stockholm and 800 in London next week whether to double-up in Atlanta.

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Jamaica's Merlene Ottey (R) crosses the finish line in the women's 100 metres dash at the Bislett athletics meet in Norway on July 5. Ottey won with 10.95 seconds ahead of third placed American Gwen Torrence (L).

MLS confounds critics

ZURICH, July 6: American professional soccer, a sport derided by so many as a non-starter in the land of baseball, basketball and American football, has taken off beyond all expectations, according to the league's owners, reports Reuter.

Half way through its first season, Major League Soccer (MLS) is drawing more fans to the stadiums and attracting a bigger television audience than its creators had dared to expect.

The 10-team professional league is in advance of all its major targets and has silenced detractors who doubted it would ever happen after its launch was postponed twice.

It took just 47 matches to draw a million fans, six weeks earlier than predicted. Average crowds are just under 20,000 when projections were for 10,000 paying fans.

MLS chairman Alan Rothenberg said the average at the end of the season was expected to be between 16,000 and 18,000.

"That's 40-60 per cent above projections which is terrific," he said.

But MLS officials admitted the real test for the fledgling league, which kicked off only in April, will be next year

when it is no longer a curiosity driven by a huge marketing and publicity machine.

"You couldn't ask for a better start but at the same time none of us are saying the job is done and that we can sit back and rest on our laurels," Rothen