

Bichel replaces Gillespie

SYDNEY, Dec 29: Australian selectors today called up Queensland paceman Andrew Bichel to play Pakistan in the World Series one-day contest here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old leading wicket-taker in Australian first class cricket joins fellow Queenslanders Stuart Law as the new men in the 12-man squad to face Pakistan.

Bichel has taken 29 wickets at 17.48 and gets his opportunity at top level after a strong display against West Indies for an Australian XI in Hobart last month.

Bichel replaces Jason Gillespie of South Australia, who sustained muscles in his side while bowling in the first innings of the third Test, won by six wickets by the West Indies on Saturday. Gillespie could be out for up to six weeks.

Selectors relegated batsmen Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer for the limited-over match, while there was no room for Ricky Ponting, who was dropped from the third Test, making way for Langer at number three in the batting.

Hayden and Langer failed to impress against the curly Aussie-inspired West Indian bowling attack in the third Test.

AUSTRALIA (from): Mark Taylor (capt), Mark Waugh, Steve Waugh, Stuart Law, Greg Blewett, Michael Bevan, Tom Moody, Ian Healy, Andrew Bichel, Paul Reiffel, Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath.

Sanchez ends Spanish sojourn

MEXICO CITY, Dec 29: Veteran striker Hugo Sanchez is poised to sign for Mexico's Atletico Cejaya, joining two former teammates from his days at Real Madrid, reports Reuter.

Sanchez, 38, arrived late on Friday from Spain and travelled immediately to the central industrial city to join the increasingly fashionable club known as "The Bulls."

"We have agreed on the time and money questions (of my contract) and there are only a few minute details to tie up before I sign," Sanchez told reporters.

Sanchez said it would be his last season and he was relishing the opportunity to line up with former teammates Emilio "Bultre" Butragueno and Miguel Gonzalez "Michel".

"I started my football career in Mexico and I want to end and die playing the sport in Mexico," Sanchez said. "I did it not only for sentimental reasons but also because Michel and Butragueno are here."

Yugoslavs beat Argentina

MAR DEL PLATA, Argentina, Dec 29: Yugoslavia beat Argentina 3-2 (halftime 1-1) in a friendly soccer international on Saturday, reports Reuter.

SCORES: Yugoslavia: Milinko Drolovic (22nd minute), Dejan Govedavica (53rd), Jovicic (77th).

Argentina: Juan Esnaider (43rd, penalty), Hugo Morales (61st).

Alec keeps Eng hopes alive

HARARE, Zimbabwe, Dec 29: Alec Stewart recorded his ninth Test century here Sunday in a display of determination and patience. His 101 not out has prevented any prospect of a Zimbabwe victory in the second cricket Test and opened up the opportunity for England to win and take the two-match series, reports AP.

Stewart batted throughout the fourth day, scoring just eight boundaries. He kept two of them back with which to pass the century mark, by on-driving Henry Olonga and then square cutting him in fading light.

Stewart has had previous Test scores in Zimbabwe of 48 and 73, so his 100 came as no surprise. He had partnerships of 68 with Nick Knight in the morning and then 106 with Graham Thorpe later on. Thorpe reached his 50 to pull himself out of the doldrums and England into command of this Test just one over after Stewart reached his landmark.

The Zimbabwe bowlers kept it tight all day and their fielding was exemplary as usual. Paul Strang and Guy Whittall in particular pegged Stewart and Thorpe down and it was a gritty rather than entertaining batting display by England, who had easily their best day of the month-long tour.

They lost only two wickets today, those of Knight and Nasser Hussain for six. Both were caught off Strang.

England ended the day on 195-3, an overall lead of 136 with seven wickets remaining. Everything depends on the timing of England captain Mike Atherton's declaration Monday and whether Zimbabwe can survive for a possible two full sessions.

Earlier on Saturday, Darren Gough took four for 40 to bowl his side back into the game, but Mike Atherton failed again as England reached 17 for one at the close of the third day.

With Gough to the fore Zimbabwe were bowled out for 215, a first innings lead of 59, much less than they had hoped for when they resumed at 93 for two.

But Atherton's nightmare run with the bat continued. He made just one before edging a catch to first slip from the pace of Heath Streak 13 balls into England's second innings. The captain has made just 34 runs in four innings in this series.

England were spared more embarrassment as they were offered the light with 11 overs left in a day lengthened by an hour after overnight rain had prevented play before lunch.

Zimbabwe's batsmen struggled as much as England had on the first day in conditions ideal for swing and seam bowling.

Only gritty opener Grant Flower (73) and all-rounder Paul Strang (47 not out) kept a revitalised England attack at bay.

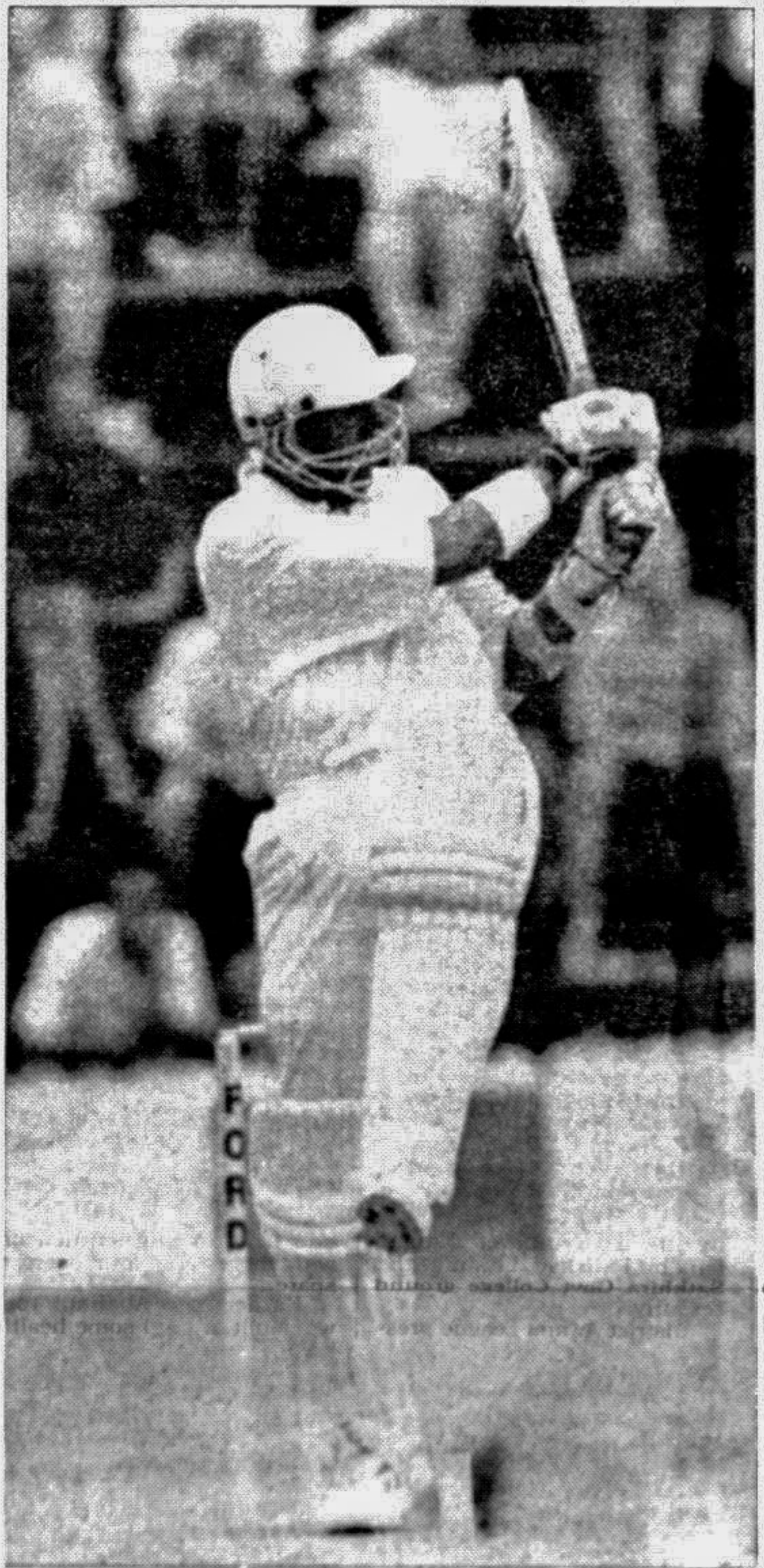
But it took an inspired spell from Gough in mid-afternoon to get England on track. He had Dave Houghton caught down the leg side for 29 and trapped Andy Flower lbw for six. His best ball uprooted Guy Whittall's leg stump when he had scored only

one. With more weather interruptions predicted a draw is the likely conclusion to a match where England have been second best for most of the first three days.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the fourth day of the second Test between Zimbabwe and England on Sunday.

Table with columns for Team, Innings, Runs, Wickets, Extras, and Bowlers. Includes England's first and second innings and Zimbabwe's first innings.



England batsman Alec Stewart pulls towards the on side during the fourth day's play of the second and final Test against Zimbabwe in Harare yesterday - AFP/UNB photo

Vengsarkar vexed

DURBAN, Dec 29: Former Indian Test captain Dilip Vengsarkar said his country had batted pathetically in their crushing first-Test defeat against South Africa, a Durban newspaper reported today, reports Reuter.

Vengsarkar, who led India in 10 Tests, lambasted the side who were routed for 100 and 66 in their two innings and beaten by 328 runs on Saturday with two full days to spare in the first Test of a three-match series.

"It was quite pathetic. I felt embarrassed witnessing the way we buckled to a team who do not possess fast bowlers like the West Indies and Australia did when I played Test cricket," Vengsarkar said in Durban's Sunday Tribune.

"When we faced Malcolm Marshall, Joel Garner, Andy Roberts and Colin Croft of the West Indies — and Australians like Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson — the Indian Test side never buckled under the pressure."

"We didn't win many Test matches against those teams but we never really capitulated against them."

Vengsarkar also said the time has come for India to prepare different Test pitches at home to improve batting quality.

"How can you be atop Test-playing nation if the (Indian) board continually prepares dusty spinners' wickets for our home series in the sub-continent?"

"It's time the board took a closer look at the situation at home. Preparing wickets which always suit our bowlers does not produce quality Test players. It's time for our batsmen to adapt and to start applying themselves to different conditions."

"We have some quality batsmen in the likes of (Sachin) Tendulkar and (Mohammad) Azharuddin and I believe they will have to show us the way in the next two Tests against South Africa."

Robson limits Ronaldo

BARCELONA, Dec 29: Barcelona coach Bobby Robson is not letting his Brazilian star striker Ronaldo return home for New Year's eve as punishment for missing a training session here on Saturday morning, reports AFP.

Ronaldo, a hot contender for this year's FIFA player-of-the-year award, was due back at training at 10:00 local time, after passing Christmas in his home country.

But international flight delays meant that Ronaldo only arrived back in time to join the team for the afternoon training session.

Englishman Robson decided to schedule the 20-year-old for a personal training session on December 31 as a disciplinary measure.

Ronaldo will be joined by fellow Brazilian Giovanni, who has been reprimanded for the same reasons.

According to Spanish press, Ronaldo was intending to return to Brazil until the Spanish league got underway again on January 4.

Only a week ago, Ronaldo opened fire on his coach Bobby Robson's methods in the local press, saying they had to change.

The 20-year-old sensation indicated to journalists that he was much more at ease playing under the guidance of the Brazilian national coach Mario Zagalo.

At the time of the attack, Ronaldo, who was a member of the Brazilian World Cup winning squad in 1994, had not scored a goal in over a month in Spanish league. In 1994-95 he created a sensation in the Dutch football league when he scored 30 goals in the season for PSV Eindhoven.

Robson, a former England coach who took charge in the summer, has come in for increasing criticism from disgruntled fans with Barca third in the table after losing to Real Madrid three weeks ago, a defeat which left their bitter rivals four points clear of the Catalan giants.



A goalmouth melee during an English Premier league match between Manchester United and Leeds United at Old Trafford on Dec 28. Manchester won 1-0. — AFP/UNB photo

Newcastle bounce back

LONDON, Dec 29: Newcastle United returned to form with a bang Saturday as they regained their faltering title bid by thrashing Tottenham Hotspur 7-1 at St James' Park to end a seven game winless streak, reports AFP.

Kevin Keegan's troops stopped the rot in style, to end the worst run of his five-year stewardship and send Spurs home with their tails between their legs as they cantered to victory with two goals apiece from Les Ferdinand, Alan Shearer and Rob Lee and one from Philippe Albert.

Allan Nielsen scored a consolation for the visitors at the death.

Spurs' north London rivals Arsenal were meanwhile frustrated in their attempt to top of the Premiership as Aston Villa twice came from behind to snatch a 2-2 draw at Highbury.

Ian Wright hit his 22nd goal of the season and 199th in league football to give Arsenal the lead after fine work by Frenchman Patrick Vieira and Dennis Bergkamp.

Wright, signing off before a three-match suspension following his dismissal at Nottingham Forest last week, could have brought up the double ton just before the break when he rounded Villa's Mark Bosnich. But he was denied by a Ricardo Semino goal-line clearance.

After the break, Steve Bould had to clear off the line for the hosts before Ian Taylor could turn the ball in after Dwight Yorke had caused havoc in the Gunners' defence.

But Villa would not be denied, and Savo Milosevic blasted home the equaliser after Yorke won a high ball in the area.

In a thrilling finale, Paul Merson put the Gunners back in front with a rasping drive, only for Yorke to hard down the other end and slam home a left-

foot strike to give the visitors a deserved point. That left Arsenal two points behind Liverpool and without a win in four games.

At Old Trafford, an early Eric Cantona penalty awarded for a Gary Kelly foul on Ryan Giggs gave champions Manchester United the points in a 1-0 win over struggling Leeds United.

United's win took them into second place above Arsenal on goal average.

Wimbledon, whose form this season has been a revelation, meanwhile bounced back from their 5-0 slaughter at the hands of Aston Villa which ended a 19-match unbeaten streak, to win 3-1 at Everton and hold onto fourth spot.

Graham Stuart opened the scoring for Everton on 23 minutes, but the dons turned the game completely on its head in the second period with goals from Efan Ekoku, Oyvind Loehardsen and Marcus Gayle.

But the performance of the day was unquestionably at St James' Park, where Newcastle eased the mounting pressure on their manager's shoulders.

Shearer, leading the line superbly, blasted his 14th goal of the season and Ferdinand hit his 12th before Spurs could draw breath after Keith Gillespie's mazy run down the left effectively ending the contest.

In the second half, the German ran riot and Ferdinand stroked home the third from close range after good work by Peter Beardsley and John Beresford. Rob Lee then struck twice — one a fine solo effort — either side of Albert's majestic strike.

Elsewhere in the Premiership, Gianfranco Zola blasted his fourth goal in three games for Chelsea as Ruud Gullit's men took an early lead over midtable Sheffield Wednesday.

And the Italian then combined with compatriot Dominic Di Matteo before supplying an

inch-perfect cross for Mark Hughes to head number two.

But Mark Pembridge responded almost immediately with a 30-yard left-foot volley to pull one back for the visitors. Dejan Stefanovic hit a last-gasp equaliser to preserve Wednesday's 11-game unbeaten run.

Leicester and Nottingham Forest drew 2-2 at Filbert Street, the hosts taking a 10th minute lead through promising youngster Emile Heskey's sixth goal of the season. Nigel Clough slammed home the equaliser in the 37th minute after Kevin Campbell headed on.

After the break, Muzzy Izzet hit Leicester's second after a through pass from Heskey. Colin Cooper rescued a point.

Coventry hammered Middlesbrough 3-0 after the game was delayed for 15 minutes because of crowd congestion at Highfield Road, where sky blues keeper Steve Grizovic set a new club record in making his 544th appearance for the sky blues, beating the previous mark set by centre-half George Curtis.

City went in front in the 29th minute, when Darren Huckerby headed in from close range following a pinpoint centre from John Salako.

It was Huckerby's third goal for Coventry since his move from Newcastle a month ago.

McAllister made the game safe with a late penalty for handball to give his side their fourth straight victory.

Craig Liddle put through his own net five minutes from time to complete Boro's misery.

West Ham, without a win since October 26, saw off Sunderland 2-0 courtesy of a Slaven Bilic header and a brilliant individual effort by Romanian Florin Raduciu.

Finally, Derby and Blackburn fought out a goalless draw at the baseball ground.

Leaders Liverpool were to face Southampton at the Dell in today's game.

Track's triumphs, tears & shames

PARIS, Dec 29 (AFP): Carl Lewis, who says he will bow out next year, extended his career at the top of men's athletics into a 15th year at the Atlanta Olympic Games when he became only the fourth competitor to win nine Olympic gold medals.

His fourth successive long jump title at the age of 35 allowed the 1983 world champion to match the feats of Finnish athlete Paavo Nurmi, who competed in 1920-28, Russian gymnast Larissa Latyina, 1956-64, and American swimmer Mark Spitz, 1968-72.

Michael Johnson broke the 200m world record as well as winning the 400m in performance of brute strength.

World champion Donovan Bailey, 28, reclaimed Canada's name eight years after Ben Johnson's Seoul shame by winning the 100m in a world record 9.84 sec, the first time this record had been broken at the Olympics since 1968.

However 36-year-old defending champion Linford Christie of Britain captured just as much attention by getting himself disqualified for two false starts. Gail Devers of the United States retained her women's 100m title at 29, winning her third major title by a photo-finish.

She also triumphed at Barcelona in 1992 and at the 1993 World Championships in Stuttgart by one hundredth of a second.

Merlene Ottey lost out in Stuttgart and again in Atlanta, where she was also beaten by Marie-Jose Perec in the 200m as the Frenchwoman completed a 200m-400m double.

However 36-year-old Jamaican was the fastest woman over 100m this year and will be competing again in next year's World Championships in Athens.

Atlanta promised a sprinters' games and the 1996 Olympics duly lived up to its pledge. Johnson deserves pride of place just ahead of Bailey, Perec and Russian middle-distance victor Svetlana Masterkova.

The Texan's electrifying run over 200m, smashing his own one-month-old world mark by an enormous 0.34 sec as he timed 19.32, proved historic. His second 100, timed at 9.20

sec, catapulted him past Namibian Frankie Fredericks and Trinidad's Ato Boldon.

Fredericks, a double silver medalist just he was in Barcelona, and Boldon can count themselves unlucky. It took world records to beat them in both their events.

Bailey's 9.84sec was more dramatic than the 200m final because Christie delayed the race for several minutes as he argued with officials following his disqualification.

To complete his misery, he was later knocked out of the 200m heats and then failed to get a run in the relay after his underestimates bungled their opening heat.

Atlanta will be remembered for the string of world-class stars who flopped. Sonia o'Sullivan of Ireland was the biggest casualty. The 5,000m world champion also

looked a sure bet for the 1,500 but ill health saw her fail in both. Maria Mutola of Mozambique, virtually unbeatable over 800m, was also hoping to challenge for the 1500 metres defeat to Masterkova over the shorter distance, however, persuaded her to pack her bags immediately.

Hassiba Boulmerka of Algeria, the Barcelona champion, was spiked in the semifinals and Masterkova ran away with her second gold, to become the

first woman since Soviet Tatyana Kazankina in 1976 to take both distances. In the men's events, the major casualties fell to injury. Javier Sotomayor, the high jump world record holder, could only clear one height in the final before tramping off.

Sergey Bubka, the five-times pole vault world champion who had no-heighted at Barcelona, this time failed to start, with an Achilles tendon injury.

Mike Powell, the 1991 and 1993 world long jump champion and world record-holder, was left weeping uncontrollably, face down in the pit after his abortive challenge. For every broken-hearted loser there was a smiling winner and world record holder Jonathan Edwards of Britain provided one of the best displays of sportsmanship as he encouraged eventual winner Kenny Harrison, Dever's boyfriend, during the triple jump competition.

Chioma Ajunwa, who had played in Nigeria's women's World Cup soccer team in 1991, became the first African woman to win an Olympic field event. Her surprise win in the long jump brought a happy end to a four-year suspension for using drugs.

Ghada Shouaa of Syria became the first Arab woman to triumph in a field event, winning the seven-event heptathlon as defending champion Jackie Joyner-Kersey finally gave way to a hamstring injury.

China's Wang Junxia, a deadpan winner in the 1993 World Championships, returned as an exuberant competitor, winning the 5,000m and losing an epic confrontation with Portugal's Fernanda Ribeiro in the 10,000m.

World 1,500m champion Noureddine Morceli of Algeria made amends for his Barcelona flop while Norway's Vebjorn Rodal and Burkina Faso's Veronique Nyongabo took their chances in the absence of two Kenyans.

Wilson Kipketer, who won the 800m for Denmark in the 1995 World Championships, failed to satisfy the Kenyan authorities he was a Dane and excluded from the Games.

He later went on to miss Seb Coe's 1981 world record by one tenth of a second.

Daniel Komen failed to

make the grade at the Kenyan trials but later broke the two mile and 3,000m world records. He also led home five men in under 13 minutes in a scintillating 5,000m in Zurich where he failed by seven tenths of a second to break Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie's world mark.

Nyongabo won the Atlanta 5,000m while Gebrselassie won his other world record distance of 10,000m.

Kenyans dominated the steeplechase again and they could make an impact in five events in Athens next year as they had at least five runners in the top 10 of the 800m, 1,500m, 5,000m, 10,000m and steeplechase.

However, there were signs that African runners could be beaten.

At the time of the attack, Ronaldo, who was a member of the Brazilian World Cup winning squad in 1994, had not scored a goal in over a month in Spanish league. In 1994-95 he created a sensation in the Dutch football league when he scored 30 goals in the season for PSV Eindhoven.

Robson, a former England coach who took charge in the summer, has come in for increasing criticism from disgruntled fans with Barca third in the table after losing to Real Madrid three weeks ago, a defeat which left their bitter rivals four points clear of the Catalan giants.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

A stunned Mary Pierce of France holds her head in disbelief after straight sets loss to American Chanda Rubin on the first day of the Hopman Cup in Perth yesterday. Pierce lost 4-6, 1-6. — AFP/UNB photo

Tiny Hingis aiming higher

PERTH, Dec 29 (Agencies): Martina Hingis says she's ready to make the next step. At 16, the Swiss tennis prodigy believes she's capable of winning a Grand Slam singles title.

Hingis ended 1996 ranked fourth in the world after a series of scintillating performances.

The Czech-born right-hander reached her first Grand Slam quarterfinal at the Australian Open in January and then beat world No 1 Steffi Graf on her way to the final at the Italian Open. She also reached the US Open semifinals in August.

Hingis won her first career singles title at Filderstadt, Germany, in October, beating Anke Huber in the final, and a month later trounced Monica Seles 6-2, 6-0 to win the title at Oakland, California.

At the WTA Tour Championships in New York, Hingis pushed Graf to the limit before losing the five-set final.

Graf has already said she expects Hingis — whose parents named her after Martina Navratilova — to succeed her on top of the world rankings.

The bubbly baseliner isn't setting her sights that high at the moment, but does believe she is capable of winning one of the big four: the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon or the US Open.

"I would like to win a Grand Slam tournament, that's my big dream for this year," Hingis said Sunday at the Hopman Cup teams championship. "I think I have a good chance to make it."

"Talk of having the potential to be the top-ranked player in the world doesn't phase her either."

Becker to play Down Under. PERTH, Australia, Dec 29: Defending champion Boris Becker has confirmed he will play in next month's Australian Open tennis championships, tournament director Paul McNamee said Sunday, reports AP.

Speaking at the Hopman Cup, McNamee said he had received a fax message from Becker's management saying the German player has recovered from an ankle injury sustained in training that forced him to withdraw from a tournament in Doha, Qatar, next week.

McNamee said Becker also had confirmed he will play in the Colonial Classic exhibition event at Kooyong the week before the first Grand Slam tournament of the year.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

The Australian Open will be played from Jan 13-26 at the National Tennis Center in Melbourne.

Becker's win in Melbourne last January was the first Grand Slam tournament the 29-year-old had won in five years. He also finished the year impressively, reaching the final of the ATP Championship, where he lost narrowly to Pete Sampras in five sets, then winning the Grand Slam Cup.

Tracy Austin, Jennifer Capriati and Andrea Jaeger. All three fell by the wayside after making bright starts to their career at an early age.

"I am not Austin, Capriati or Jaeger. I am just myself and I have a different of tennis and just go my way," she told reporters ahead of Switzerland's opening round match of Hopman Cup match.

"Sometimes you see that they made a mistake in life. We have a great team and I always enjoy to play tennis, so I don't think it will be a big problem for me to stay like that."

Hingis credits her balanced frame of mind to her mother, Melanie, a former Czech champion.

"For me she always was the most important thing in my tennis," Hingis said.

"I hope it stays like that ... she is not only my tennis coach, she is my mother and a terrific person and she has always been my biggest help during my career."

"I go my own way. I travel with my mother and we make a great team."

Hingis, a determined baseliner with a fierce double-handed backhand, is recovering from a bout of flu after swooping the intense cold of a Swiss winter for the steamy heat of an Australian summer.

"But I'm feeling better every day," she said.

Hingis is teamed with Marc Rosset on the Swiss team aiming to win the Hopman Cup for the first time. The Swiss pair reached the final last year, but lost to Croatia after Rosset lost his temper during the mixed doubles in the final, punched a court-side advertising hoarding and had to withdraw with a broken right hand.

"For sure I won't make the same mistake again," said Rosset, who said he has recovered from a back muscle injury he suffered in training for the event.

The second-seeded Swiss pair open their Hopman Cup campaign on Monday against the Romanian team of Adrian Panu and Irina Spirlea.

The Hopman Cup, which features men's singles, women's singles and mixed doubles continues through Jan 4 and is one of a series of warm-up events for the Australian Open, which starts in Melbourne on Jan 13.

MARIE JOSE PEREC

looked a sure bet for the 1,500 but ill health saw her fail in both.</