Windies-SL Test

Big booster for St Vincent

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Jan 7: Pending the final allocation of dates for the upcoming West Indies vs Sri Lanka series, St Vincent Et Grenadines are set to host their first Test match, it was announced here Monday, reports AFP.

The Arnos Vale Field in Kingstown will, along with the recreation ground in St Johns, Antigua, host the two Tests which Sri Lanka will contest in the region later this year.

"It's a great fillip for cricket not only in St Vincent but also in the Windward Islands area," Lennox John, president of the St Vincent Et the Grenadines and the Windwards Islands Cricket Board, told AFP.

He added: "We felt our time had come. St Vincent Et the Grenadines have produced a few Test cricketers in the last 15 years and they never had a chance to actually see a Test match until they were chosen for West Indies.

"We need to expose our people to Test cricket and we feel this is a wonderful opportunity for St Vincent because it's Sri Lanka's first visit to the Caribbean and it will be the first time we will host a Test match."

The Arnos Vale Field has become a regular stop in limited overs series in the Caribbean for the last five years. In that time there has been substantial improvement to the facilities at the ground to bring it up to Test standard.

"I do not think that Arnos Vale is worse than any of the other grounds in the Caribbean. There were some doubts about the quality of the pitch, but I do not know why," John said.

The upcoming Test could be the first of several at the venue, which could host matches against England when they tour the region next year.

The Sri Lankans are expected to travel to the Caribbean on completion of the series between West Indies and India in early May, although the dates have yet to be set.

Nigeria run short of booters?

LAGOS, Jan 7: Nigeria's coach Amodu Shaibu had a squad of just seven players with him when he left for Nairobi on Saturday to begin preparations for a vital World Cup qualifier against Kenya on January 11, reports Reuter.

But Shaibu, himself sick with gastroenteritis, said he expected to have his full squad of 19 in camp by Wednesday.

"Some players are staying behind due to personal problems while others are still playing for clubs abroad, only promising to join us in Kenya." He explained at the airport. "They didn't report to camp on December 28 as I'd planned and when a few did later, the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) had not made lodging arrangements.

"I am still suffering from gastroenteritis and very unhappy that we couldn't commence training here before heading for Kenya," Shaibu said.

"I have now shifted my camp to Kenya where we will start training on Monday. I should have my full squad of 19 players by Wednesday and everything will be all right."

Local newspapers reports said the NFA could not secure hotel accommodation for the players because it was in debt to several Lagos hotels.

The match is vital for the reigning Olympic champions, who are second behind Guinea in their group on goal difference with only one team to qualify from the group.

A rematch costs $ 30 million!

LAS VEGAS, Nevada, Jan 7 World Boxing Association heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield wants more than 30 million dollars to fight a rematch with Mike Tyson later this year and such a deal is near, reports AFP.

"Somewhere worth of 30 (million) is what we fell is appropriate," said Holyfield attorney Jim Thomas. "I believe we are in the same ballpark."

Should Holyfield get the sum he wants, he would surpass the record single-event payday in sport history. That mark went to Tyson, who made 30 million dollars in his 1995 comeback fight against Peter McNeeley.

Holyfield signed a rematch clause with promoter Don King for a minimum 20 million dollars. But Holyfield has the option of retiring and denying Tyson a chance at regaining the crown, so he will likely get his way.

Tyson had sought equal money to Holyfield for the rematch.

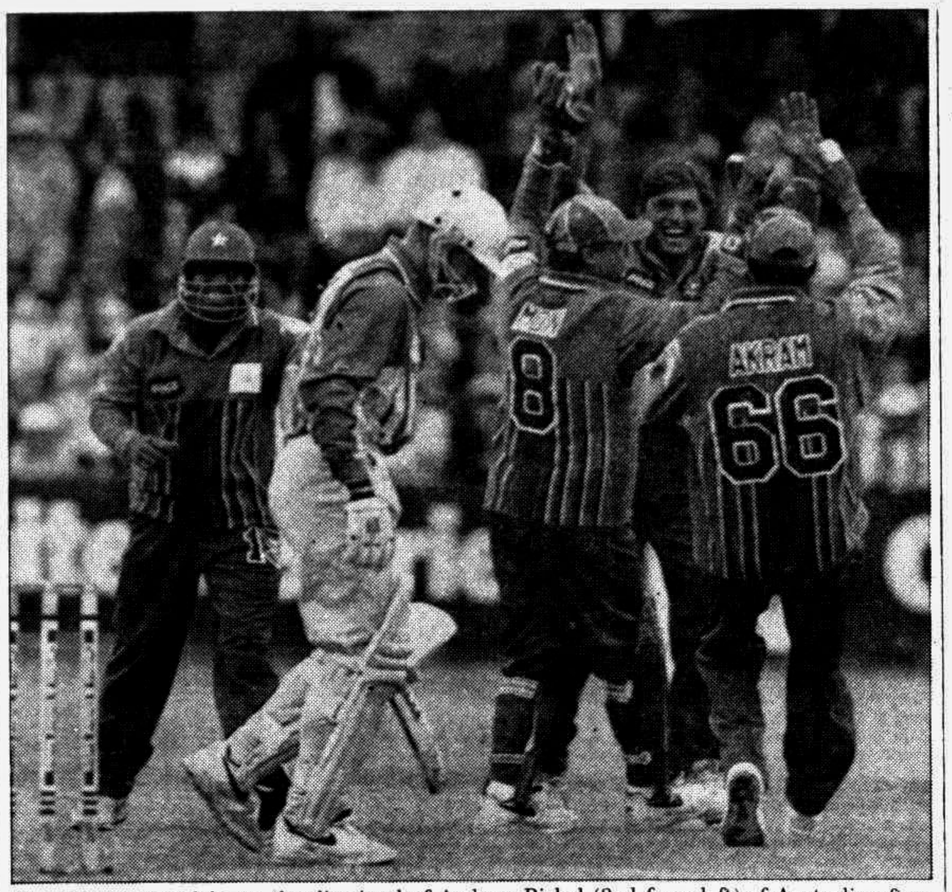
Holyfield does not want to fight Tyson until June whilst Tyson wanted the rematch by March.

There are rumours that May 3 may be chosen as a compromise for the fight, with a firm date expected to be revealed by promoter King during his January 11 card at Nashville.

The May date would be one week after Parnell Whitaker and Oscar de la Hoya are set to meet here.

Even if Tyson does not get his way, there might be a heavyweight title defence in March. International Boxing Federation champion Michael Moorer has been offered a fight against fellow US fighter Vaughn Bean.

The vacant World Boxing Council crown will be decided here next month when Britain's Lennox Lewis faces American Oliver McCall.



The Pakistanis celebrate the dismissal of Andrew Bichel (2nd from left) of Australia after leg-spinner Shahid Afridi (2nd from right) trapped him leg-before during their World Series match in Hobart yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

Pakistan win a thriller

HOBART, Australia, Jan 7: Pakistan recovered from a dismal top-order collapse to beat Australia by 29 runs today in a low-scoring World Series limited-over match dominated by bowlers, reports Reuter.

Chasing Pakistan's seemingly inadequate total of 149 all out, Australia were dismissed for a paltry 120 on a lively wicket at Bellerive Oval.

It was a remarkable performance by Pakistan after their top three batsmen — Aamir Sohail, Zahoor Elahi and Ijaz Ahmed — were all dismissed for ducks to leave them in disarray at seven for three early on.

But a spirited innings of 54, the highest score of the match, by Mohammad Wasim lifted his side to a respectable total that ultimately proved enough for his bowlers to defend.

Pakistan captain Wasim Akram and fellow fast bowler Mohammad Zahid fully exploited a pitch that offered both movement and variable bounce to dismiss Australia in 41.3 overs.

At times, the pitch was almost unplayable as deliveries reared alarmingly off a length, troubling all the batsmen.

The final result justified Akram's decision to bat in overcast conditions favourable to the bowlers after winning the toss in front of a record crowd of 11,541 in Hobart.

It also leaves the Australians in danger of not making the World Series finals.

Pakistan joined West Indies on six points from five games at the top of the table in the triangular tournament.

Australia, who lost ten of their last 12 one-day matches at home and abroad, are on four points but have played one more game than their rivals. The Australians have two more games to play while the other two both have three left.

Zahid bowled at extreme pace to remove all-rounder Greg Blewett and leg-spinner Shane Warne, compensating for his occasional lack of control that cost three wides and six no-balls.

Akram, in contrast, combined his menace with relentless accuracy to claim three for 13 in eight overs.

STANDINGS

Standings in the World Series triangular limited-over cricket competition on Tuesday: (tabulate under played, won, lost, points).

West Indies	5	3	2	6
Pakistan	5	3	2	6
Australia	6	2	4	4

AKRAM... 13 for 3

Australia's poor batting display was highlighted by the fact that none of their players managed to score more runs than the extras total of 28.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the limited-over World Series match between Australia and Pakistan at Bellerive Oval on Tuesday:

PAKISTAN

Sohail c Healy b McGrath	0
Elahi lbw b Bichel	0
Ijaz c S Waugh b Bichel	0
Inzamam c McGrath b Blewett	10
M Wasim c Taylor b Warne	54
Jamshed c S Waugh b Bichel	23
Moin Khan not out	33
Akram st Healy b Warne	1
Afridi c Blewett b Stuart	3
Saqlain run out	2
Zahid run out	1
Extras: (lb-10, w-12)	22
Total: (45.2 overs)	149

Fall of wickets: 1-4; 2-4; 3-7; 4-28; 5-78; 6-116; 7-121; 8-132; 9-136.

Bowling:	O	M	R	W
McGrath	8	1	21	1
Bichel	10	3	17	3
Stuart	10	1	35	1
Blewett	10	2	31	1
Warne	7.2	0	35	2

AUSTRALIA

Taylor c Moin b Akram	6
M Waugh c Moin b Ijaz	18
Law c Ijaz b Jamshed	21
S Waugh b Akram	5
Bevan lbw b Akram	24
Blewett c M Wasim b Zahid	9
Healy c Akram b Saqlain	2
Warne c Elahi b Zahid	4
Bichel lbw b Afridi	2
Stuart b Afridi	1
McGrath not out	0
Extras: (lb-6, w-9, nb-13)	28
Total: (41.3 overs)	120

Fall of wickets: 1-29; 2-38; 3-52; 4-68; 5-93; 6-102; 7-115; 8-118; 9-120.

Bowling:	O	M	R	W
W Akram	8	2	13	3
Zahid	10	1	53	2
Ijaz	10	0	28	1
Jamshed	4	1	6	1
Saqlain	8	1	13	1
Afridi	1.3	0	1	2

Result: Pakistan won by 29 runs.

Jim turns over a new leaf

MELBOURNE, Jan 7 (Reuter): Fallen American tennis star Jim Courier, climbing back up the rankings after a win in the Qatar Open last week, declared himself happy with his game today and keen to give this month's Australian Open "another shake."

Sandwiched between five of the world's top 10 players at a joint news conference, Courier said he wanted to turn his back on a disappointing 1996 and begin the year afresh with another tilt at the title he won in 1992 and 1993.

"I didn't have a very good season last year for whatever reason, but that's a closed chapter and I'm going to do better this year," the former world number one told reporters.

The two-time winner of both the Australian and French Opens was speaking on the eve of a small but star-studded exhibition tournament, the Colonial Classic, a warm-up event for the Open which starts at Melbourne Park on Monday.

Courier is ranked 15 in the world after his 7-5, 6-7 (5-7), 6-2 defeat of Britain's Tim Henman in Qatar, having ended 1996 at number 26, his lowest year-end ranking in eight years.

"I played well last week," Courier said. But he added that he needed more tough matches before embarking on his eighth Australian Open campaign.

"It's a nice warm-up to play against these great players sitting beside me," said Courier, who has drawn world number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia in the first round of the three-day Colonial Classic.

The exhibition also includes the world's top two ranked players, Pete Sampras and Michael Chang, as well as Germany's Boris Becker, who is defending his Australian Open title this year and has a deep ambition to reach world number one again.

Becker, who snared his sixth Grand Slam when he beat Chang at Melbourne Park last year, had a patchy year in 1996 with injuries forcing him out of the French Open and Wimbledon and, last week, the Qatar Open.

He too is looking for a good hit-out before the Open.

"There's a very tough tournament ahead of me with very tough players. I have to improve my form and get match tough," said a leather-jacketed Becker, now ranked number six.

The Colonial Classic offers

JIM COURIER

minimal prize money and its chief attraction to the players is the opportunity of a timely warm-up on the same rebound ace surface as at Melbourne Park.

Chang, who won the past two classics but has yet to clinch a second grand since winning the 1989 French Open, said he felt this year's Australian Open could be his.

"The last couple of years have been great tournament for me," said Chang, runner-up in last year's Australian and US Opens. "I've been able to follow it (the Colonial Classic) up and do quite well at the Australian, so I'm hoping to go one better (this year)."

As for the world number one, Sampras again rated his third-round nemesis at last year's Australian Open, big-hitting local Mark Philippoussis, as a danger to the seeded players. Philippoussis dropped out a Sydney tournament this week because of tendinitis and was resting before the Open.

"I've played him three or four times now and each time it's like a war zone trying to return his serve," Sampras said.

Australia's Jason Stoltenberg, a semifinalist at Wimbledon last year, underwent wrist surgery today and withdrew from both the Open and the Colonial Classic.

Cycling in Kabul

KABUL, Jan 7: Fifteen cyclists raced along a main Kabul thoroughfare today in a sports event sponsored by the Afghan Olympic Committee, the first in the capital since the Taliban takeover, reports AFP.

The cycle race started near a battle-tank guarding Kabul airport and continued down the straightway to Ariana Square near the presidential palace, traffic police cleared the way for the contestants.

The five kilometre (three mile) cycle race was won by 24-year-old Mohammad Aman of the national security department team, in just under four minutes.

Aman, who began cycling 10 years ago, and gained some international experience in neighbouring Tajikistan, expressed the hope that in the future he might represent Afghanistan at the Olympics.

Motmain, a martial arts expert, later hosted a display of Kung-fu, boxing, wrestling and feats of strength by members of associated sports clubs in a central city high school.

Afghanistan was represented in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics by two men — a boxer and his coach — both of whom defected to Canada.

Windies extend winning streak

TOOWOOMBA, Australia, Jan 7: The West Indies scored their sixth straight win on their Australian tour with a 36-run victory over the Australian Country XI at Heritage Oval on Tuesday, reports AP.

Shivnarine Chanderpaul reinforced his standing as the best West Indies batsman on tour with his second century, in the limited-over match. Chanderpaul, who missed the two World Series games against Australia and Pakistan in Brisbane last weekend after having a wisdom tooth removed, made 123 as the West Indies scored 275-7 from their 50 overs.

In the absence of Brian Lara, who stayed in Brisbane with a minor illness, Chanderpaul clicked straight back into the team.

With another healthy contribution from Sherwin Campbell, who made a century against Australia in the first Test in Brisbane, the West Indies posted their second one-day score this summer of more than 250 as their form continues to improve.

Cambell made 65 in the same amount of deliveries, sharing in a 119-run stand with Chanderpaul which took only 112 balls. Campbell was only out when slogging in the final overs, clean bowled by paceman Mick Warden.

Chanderpaul also chipped in with 2-47.

SCORES

West Indies: 275-7 (Shivnarine Chanderpaul 123, Sherwin Campbell 65; Mick Warden 3-39).

Australian Country XI: 239 (Michael Robinson 50 not out; Courtney Walsh 2-12, Shivnarine Chanderpaul 2-47).

Result: West Indies won by 35 runs.

Rios stays on course

AUCKLAND, Jan 7: Top seed Marcelo Rios of Chile scored a 6-2, 6-3 win Tuesday over Karim Alami of Morocco in the first round of the US 298,000 dollars New Zealand Open tennis tournament, reports AP.

In another match, lucky loser Cecil Mamiit of the United States beat New Zealand's Brett Steven 5-7, 6-4, 6-3. Steven was originally scheduled to play second seed Magnus Gustaffson of Sweden, who withdrew Tuesday with a recurring shoulder injury.

Gustaffson was replaced with Mamiit, who lost his final qualifying match last weekend.

"I started out very nervously, but as the match went on I just felt the atmosphere settle into the tennis," Mamiit said. "I felt both of us were pressured. Brett seemed nervous and I was nervous also. I hadn't mentally prepared for the match."

Steven, still short of quality match play since returning from a left knee operation, broke Mamiit's serve in the 11th game and then wrapped up the first set 7-5. Mamiit then broke Steven in the 10th game of the second set to level at 1-1.

He then broke Steven in the fourth game of the third set then held his nerve all the way to the finish to progress through to the second round.

In other matches, Norway's Christian Ruud beat fourth seed Alex Corretja of Spain 6-7 (5-7), 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 while Slovakia's Karol Kucera beat eighth seed Martin Damm of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-1.

Third seed Alberto Berasategui beat Spanish compatriot Roberto Carretero 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 and sixth seed Chris Woodruff of the United States defeated Germany's Bernd Karbacher 7-5, 6-4.

Lopez's great accolade

MEXICO CITY, Jan 7: Members of the World Boxing Council unanimously elected Mexico's Ricardo Lope 1996 boxer of the year, reports AP.

Lopez defended his strawweight champion title four times in 1996, all of them by knock-outs. He has never lost a fight in 12 years of professional boxing, the council said in a statement released Monday.

"It is a new world record for the lighter weights," the council said.

Super lightweight Oscar De la Hoya was given honourable mention for winning his title from previous champion Julio Cesar Chavez. Their June match was named most dramatic fight of the year.

The distinction of fight of the year was handed to the November battle between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield, which council members qualified as "one of the greatest surprises" in the history of boxing.

Featherweight champion Luisito Espinosa, of the Philippines, was singled out for most spectacular improvement during the year after defending his title four times, three of them by knock out.

Light flyweight champion Saman Sorjaturong, of Thailand, received honourable mention for defending his title five times during the year.

Rokeya Hall sports

The prize distribution ceremony of Dhaka University Rokeya Hall indoor sports competition-96 was held at the hall lounge on Monday, reports UNB.

The provost of Rokeya Hall, Prof Nurun Nahar Rahman, gave away prizes among the winners.

Chamon Ara, Sheuli Bhadra and Tamara Rahman became champions while Rashida Karim and Fatema Rupa emerged runners-up.

Arantxa, Rubin sent packing

SYDNEY, Jan 7: Jennifer Capriati, preparing for the Australian Open, took another step back towards the top Tuesday with an upset win over fellow American Chanda Rubin at the Sydney International tennis tournament, reports AP.

Capriati, 20, ranked 37 in the world, beat world No 18 Rubin 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 in a first-round match at the White City courts.

Capriati, attempting a second comeback to the women's tour after her promising career was derailed in recent years by a series of much-publicised off-court problems, said she was fast recapturing her best form.

"It feels like I'm back, that I still have what it takes to beat a player like Chanda," Capriati said of her win in 1 hour, 43 minutes.

It was Capriati's third win in four meetings with Rubin, who last week led the United States team to victory in the Hopman Cup mixed teams event in Perth.

Top seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario headed three women's seeds beaten Tuesday. She fell to American Amy Frazier 6-3, 6-3 in the second round. The top four women's seeds had first-round byes.

Capriati, who beat Monica Seles before losing to Jana Novotna in the final in Chicago in November, triumphed in an at-times high quality match, played in swirling winds on Centre Court.

Both players had trouble with the conditions, in particular Rubin, who did not hold any of her five service games in the opening set.

Capriati, whose last tournament win was at this event in 1993, also dropped her first two serves but steadied quickest.

She held to lead 4-2 and took the opening set in 34 minutes with a powerful down-the-line forehand on her sixth set point.

Rubin came to terms with the conditions and her serve in the second set. She broke her rival to lead 4-3 and served it out three games later.

But in the final set Capriati steadied, broke for 2-0 and was able to maintain the advantage, clinching her first match point with a forehand error from Rubin.

Sanchez-Vicario fell victim to too many unforced errors in the windy conditions. It was her first loss in four matches against Frazier.

Second seed Martina Hingis of Switzerland needed three sets to beat Belgium's Sabine Appelmans, ranked 19 in the world, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in a second-round match.

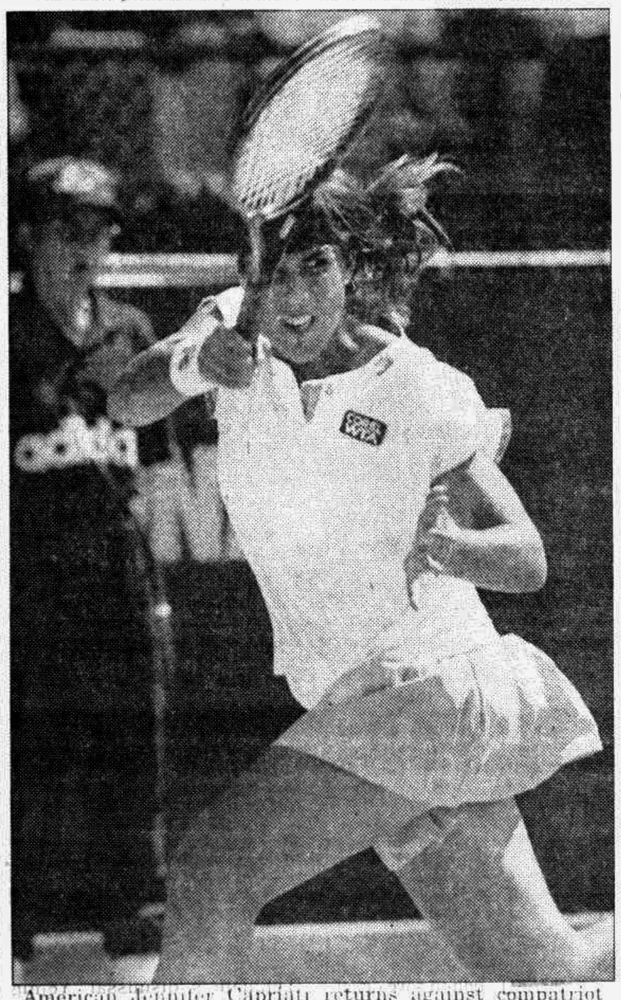
Australian Rachel McQuillan beat seventh seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands 6-4, 6-7 (0-7), 6-4 and American Mary Joe Fernandez downed Amanda Coetzer, the eighth-seeded South African, 6-1, 3-6, 6-2 in first-round upsets.

France's Mary Pierce lost 6-4, 6-4 to Yayuk Basuki of Indonesia in the second round.

In the men's event, second seed Wayne Ferreira of South Africa headed five men's seeds to lose in the first round.

Ferreira lost to Spaniard Carlos Moya 2-6, 6-0, 6-3. Swede Mikael Tillstrom beat fourth seed Jan Siemerink 6-4, 2-6, 6-1, while Spain's Sergi Bruguera beat compatriot Mantilla, the fifth seed, 7-6 (7-5), 6-3.

Marc Rosset, seeded sixth, fell 6-1, 6-4 to Australian Todd Woodbridge, who had an injury timeout after he strained a hip flexor muscle while serving at 0-1 in the second set. Seventh seed Petr Korda was defeated by Romanian Adrian Voinea 7-6 (8-6), 6-3.



American Jennifer Capriati returns against compatriot Chanda Rubin in a first round match of the Sydney International yesterday. Capriati won 6-3, 4-6, 6-3. — AFP/UNB photo

ATP's top twenty

PARIS, Jan 7: (AFP): Leading ATP men's tennis rankings issued Monday:

Name	PTS
1. Sampras (USA)	4,865
2. Chang (USA)	3,597
3. Ivanisevic (CRO)	3,492
4. Kafelnikov (RUS)	3,480
5. Muster (AUT)	3,125
6. Becker (Ger)	2,944
7. Krajicek (NED)	2,380
8. Agassi (USA)	2,364
9. Enqvist (SWE)	2,191
10. Ferreira (ISR)	2,149
11. Rios (CHI)	2,114
12. Martin (USA)	2,039
13. Costa (SPA)	1,757
14. Edberg (SWE)	1,567
15. Courier (USA)	1,561
16. Gustafsson (SWE)	1,537
17. Siemerink (NED)	1,530
18. Mantilla (SPA)	1,505
19. Stich (GER)	1,498
20. Berasategui (SPA)	1,477

Seles in absentee list

MELBOURNE, Jan 7: Defending women's singles champion Monica Seles has joined a growing list of absentees from the upcoming Australian Open tennis championships, report agencies.

Seles, who has a 28-0 record in Australia and has won the Australian Open four times, Tuesday advised tournament director Paul McNamee that a broken finger will prevent her from playing Down Under.

"I want so much to return to Australia, where I have so many happy memories and good friends," Seles said in a statement issued by her management group in the United States. "All I can do is look forward to 1998 with great anticipation."

The results of X-rays taken on the injured finger on Friday eliminated the possibility of Seles competing in Melbourne, according to a statement, issued by the publicist for the world's second-ranked woman tennis player on Monday.

Seles broke her right ring finger in two places — the finger tip and the knuckle — while warming up for an exhibition tournament last month in Slovakia and has been unable to play since December 4.

The injury forced Yugoslav-born Seles last week to withdraw from the Sydney International, which is being played at White City.

Seles won the Australian Open in 1991, 1992 and 1993 before missing the event the next two years after being stabbed during a tournament in Hamburg, Germany, in 1993.

She returned to win the Australian title last year.

Her absence will be a considerable blow for Open organisers as it follows the decision of fellow major drawcard Andre Agassi to bypass the event to take a break before starting his 1997 playing schedule.

Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands, Australian Jason Stoltenberg and Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic also will miss the tournament, with American Todd Martin an almost certain absentee.

"It is obviously a great shame that Monica won't be here, but we fully understand and wish her well in her recovery," McNamee said in a statement.

"The show goes on and we still have a fascinating women's field. We just have a slightly different mix. Last year we had Monica, but no Steffi Graf."

The broken finger is the latest in a series of injuries which have plagued Seles since she returned to competitive tennis in August, 1995.

She was slowed by tendinitis in her knees in 1995 and suffered a muscle tear in her left shoulder early last year.

The shoulder injury forced her to miss several tournaments and hampered her ability to serve throughout 1996.

A smiling Naoko Sawamatsu of Japan reacts to a line-call during her match against Mellen Tu of the United States at the Sydney International on Jan 6. Sawamatsu won 7-5, 6-3. — AFP/UNB photo

Gunnell changes her mind

LONDON, Jan 7: Former Olympic 400-metre hurdles champion Sally Gunnell says the sight of amputees in war-torn Angola persuaded her not to quit athletics despite an acute achilles tendon injury, reports Reuter.

Gunnell, who won Olympic gold in Barcelona in 1992, acknowledged she was very close to announcing her retirement after failing to keep her title last year in Atlanta, where she broke down in the final and had to be carried from the track in agony.

"For the first week it was a case of that's it. I've had enough. I can't take any more disappointment," the former 400-metre hurdles world record holder told Reuters television in an interview.

"Then I went down to Angola for the Red Cross and I saw people who'd obviously had limbs blown off by landmines and I'm thinking hang on a minute. I haven't got a problem here, it's these guys who got the problem."

"I think that was a big decision for me to get back onto the track."

Gunnell, speaking at a training centre in Horsham, south-east England, before she left for South Africa to train through the British winter, said she hoped to be back to her best in time for the World Championships in Athens in August.

"A little something inside me just thought I've got a little more to give," she said. "I don't want to be remembered for being carried off the track."