

Aussie-Windies tie today

Taylor brazens odds out



COURTNEY WALSH

ERTH, Jan 11: Australian cricket captain Mark Taylor has vowed to remain at the top of his side's batting order in Sunday's crucial one-day international match against the West Indies here, despite the greatest form crisis of his career, reports AFP.

Taylor, 32, a left-hander who has faced the new ball in 76 Tests and 107 international limited-over clashes, today dispelled thoughts he might drop down the order in the World Series match to give himself a chance to recapture his best touch.

"I have always been an opener, and that's where I have played my best cricket," he said after an extensive nets session at the WACA Ground in preparation for one of Australia's most important matches of the summer.

"I don't think now is the time to move down the order." Australia must beat the high-flying West Indies to retain any hope of qualifying for the best-of-three finals of the lucrative contest, worth 100,000 Australian dollars (78,000 US) to the winner.

The West Indies (8 points) are

current leaders in the qualifying rounds, followed by Pakistan (6) and Australia (4). All countries have played six games.

Taylor's form slump has coincided with Australia's abysmal recent record in the one-day arena.

The home nation have lost their past four limited-overs engagements, and crashed in 10 of their past 12.

Taylor has made only 117 runs at an average of 19.50 in six one-day outings this season, an aggregate of 139 at an average of 23.17 in three Tests and has one half century in his past 22 first-class innings.

Despite that atrocious record, Taylor remains cheerful and, unlike many international sporting figures in the doldrums, still finds time — and a smile — for the media.

"The thing is I feel good," Taylor said. "I have felt in reasonable nice most of the season."

"Other times, when I have had bad form, I have felt terrible at the crease, but now I don't feel that bad."

"It's just a matter of getting a start, and getting through the 20s."

"I don't really think Mark Taylor has a great problem. Things can turn around very quickly."

He was encouraged, he said, by the WACA's characteristic of helping batsmen make shots.

The West Indies, riding on a seven-wins-in-a-row crest, will do everything they can to prolong Taylor's discomfort, hoping they can hold their clear psychological advantage until the vital fourth Test of the five-match series for the Frank Worrell Trophy.

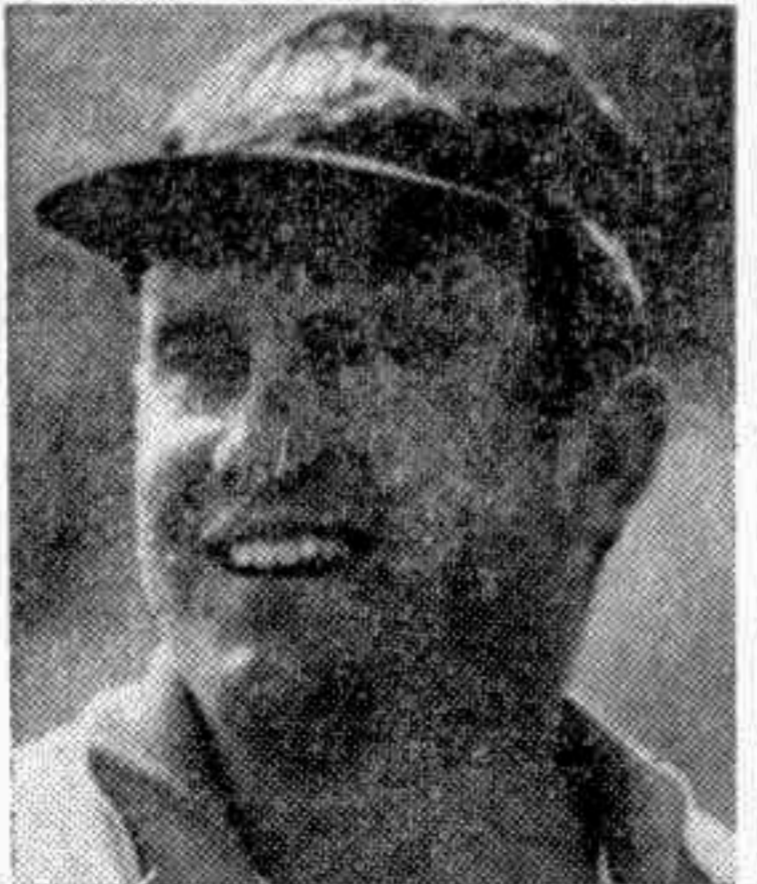
Australia lead 2-1 after winning in Brisbane and Sydney before the tourists rebounded in Melbourne.

The fourth Test starts in Adelaide Saturday fortnight, with the final match starting a week later.

West Indies captain

Courtney Walsh declined to say today whether the team would recall match-winning spearhead Curtly Ambrose in an effort to keep Taylor on the back foot.

There is a strong suspicion Ambrose, who has had a ham-



MARK TAYLOR

string problem, will be risked in the hope he can help to prevent Taylor refinding his form and ensuring Australia will be eliminated from the one-day competition.

If Australia fail to make the finals of the triangular competition, it will be the first time in 17 years they have suffered this humiliation.

**TEAMS**  
**AUSTRALIA:** Mark Taylor (capt), Ian Healy (vice-capt), Michael Bevan, Greg Blewett, Andrew Bichel, Stuart Law, Glenn McGrath, Tom Moody, Anthony Stuart, Shane Warne, Mark Waugh, Steve Waugh (12th man to be named).

**WEST INDIES:** Courtney Walsh (capt), Brian Lara (vice-capt), Jimmy Adams, Curtly Ambrose, Kerry Benjamin, Ian Bishop, Sherwin Campbell, Adrian Griffith, Robert Samuels, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Roland Holder, Carl Hooper, Junior Murray, Nixon McLean, Patterson Thompson (to be finalised).

WA in sight of victory

SYDNEY, Jan 11: Western Australia were only 54 runs from victory over New South Wales heading into the final day of their Sheffield Shield cricket match here today, reports AFP.

Chasing a target of 220 to win, Western Australia were 166 for one at stumps on the third day with Michael Hussey not out 58 and Justin Langer on 42.

Victory will give WA a share of the Shield lead with Queensland, who were in trouble against champions South Australia in Adelaide.

Darren Lehmann scored his highest first-class score of 255 to place South Australia in a strong position.

At the close of the second day, Queensland were 143 for six, with leg-spinner Peter McIntyre taking 3-44, in reply to South Australia's first innings 527 for six declared.

Tasmania will take a 257-run lead into the final day of their match against Victoria in Melbourne.

Tasmania were 182 for three at the close in their second innings with axed Test batsman Ricky Ponting unbeaten on 62 with David Boon not out 33.

Earlier, Tasmania secured first innings points when Victoria declared at 284 for nine—75 runs short of Tasmania's first innings total of 359 for seven.

Egg ordeal!

SYDNEY, Jan 11: Raw eggs thrown on to Center Court from outside the White City stadium delayed play in the men's doubles final at the Sydney International tennis tournament on Saturday, reports AP.

"At least four eggs were thrown over the stadium roof and on to the court from the street," tournament referee Bill Gilmour said. "As soon as it happened, two security guards went through and saw two guys driving away in a car."

Gilmour said he could not recall a similar incident happening in his 20 years' involvement with the tournament.

The match between Spaniards Luis Lobo and Javier Sanchez and Paul Haarhuis and Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands was delayed for five minutes while the court was cleaned. Lobo and Sanchez won 6-4, 6-7 (1-7), 6-3.

Trauma that trails behind

MELBOURNE, Jan 11 (AP): The last time Jennifer Capriati played the Australian Open, four years ago, she left in a flood of tears, her voice trembling, her career and life on the skids.

She was 16. She took little pleasure in the Olympic gold medal she had won the previous summer, dwelling instead on the losses she suffered, the pressures she felt, the image of the happy, precocious teen she had come to see as a fake.

When she tumbled out of the Australian in the quarterfinals, just a week after winning a tuneup in Sydney, she looked shattered, as if her whole career would be defined by failure.

By the end of that year, she would be gone from the tour, pursuing what passed for normalcy — high school, alcohol, drugs — until she wound up arrested for marijuana possession in a seedy motel.

She is back now, without the slender silver ring in her nose, the black nail polish, the purple hair, the oriented gaze. At 20, after two treatments for alcohol and drug abuse, after aborted comebacks and injuries, after the breakup of her parents' marriage and a dispute over training with her father and former manager-coach, Stefano, Jennifer Capriati is once again a force in women's tennis.

Capriati, coming in unseeded, may not be ready yet to win the Australian starting Monday, to upset No 1 seed and four-time champion Steffi Graf, or to overshadow top men like No 1 Pete Sampras and defending champion Boris Becker.

But there is triumph enough in coming back as far as Capriati has, to be fit enough to beat Chanda Rubin and last summer's Olympic gold medalist, Lindsay Davenport, the past week en route to the final in Sydney, and Monica Seles in Chicago last fall. The loss to Martina Hingis, 6-1, 5-7, 6-1, Saturday for the Sydney title did nothing to diminish those achievements or her prospects.

Boro's win makes Juninho hopeful

MIDDLESBROUGH, England, Jan 11: Juninho believes Middlesbrough's league Cup quarter final victory over Liverpool has given him the springboard to secure his World Cup place, reports Reuter.

The little Brazilian has never shared unsettled compatriot Emerson's unhappiness at Middlesbrough. But he was becoming alarmed at the way the club's season was sliding into disaster.

"Brazil has many new players to pick from and I need Middlesbrough to be winning games to maintain my status in the international team," he said after the 2-1 win over Liverpool on Tuesday.

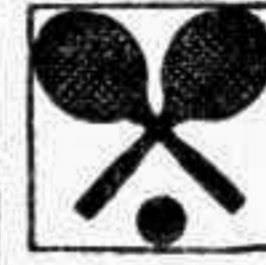
"I am very excited at the prospect of playing in the World Cup next year in France so it is important Boro do well."

"I said when I joined Middlesbrough that I came here to be successful. I am determined to win things and I would love to start by winning the League Cup at Wembley."



ON THE WINNERS' PODIUM: Briton Tim Henman (L) and Carlos Moya of Spain, champion and runner-up in the Sydney International respectively, pose for photographers with their laurels after the final yesterday. Henman beat the Spaniard 6-3, 6-1.—AFP/UNB Photo

Henman, Hingis hack thru'



SYDNEY, Jan 11: Rising British tennis star Tim Henman and Swiss prodigy Martina Hingis completed dream countdowns to the Australian Open today by winning the men's and women's finals at the Sydney international, report agencies.

Henman, 22, claimed his first professional title by beating Spain's Carlos Moya 6-3, 6-1 less than a week after playing in his first career final in Doha, Qatar.

Hingis, in her third tour win, stopped former American child star Jennifer Capriati 6-1, 7-5, 6-1, reclaiming the last title she won before her three-year absence from the game.

Henman became first British player to win the Sydney men's singles title at White City since 1902 when he beat Moya in 52 minutes.

The last British player to win the event was Dr. Wilberforce Vaughan Eaves in 1902, who was born in Australia, but played Davis Cup for Britain.

Henman will lift his ranking to around No 14 in the world from No 24 with his efforts in Sydney. The win completes a hectic week for the Oxford right-hander.

Henman was runner-up to Jim Courier in the Qatar Open last Sunday, his first ATP Tour final.

"It's great to come away with a win," Henman said after his win over an opponent world-ranked No. 28.

The victory has also quickly fulfilled Henman's three stated playing goal for 1997 to reach an ATP Tour final, to break into the top 20 and to win his first title.

Henman and 20-year-old Moya, who turned pro in 1995, traded blows from the back of the court in the opeq games before Moya broke to lead 2-1. But from that point Henman began to assert control, rushing to the net and volleying crisply.

He won 11 of the last 13 games, breaking back for 2-2 and taking the first set in 34 minutes. He broke three times in the final set — the third, fifth and seventh games. He clinched victory when a Moya backhand sailed wide.

"The first set was one of the ugliest sets of tennis I've played in a long time," said Henman.

"It was a mental battle with the win and I was a little nervous. It was a question of overcoming that."

Henman, who beat top seed and world No. 3 Goran Ivanisevic in the semifinals Friday, said his aim was now to break into the top 10.

"You have to set targets for yourself. When you achieve Tapie ready to blow the whistle

Tapie ready to blow the whistle

PARIS, Jan 11: Disgraced former Olympique Marseille club president Bernard Tapie has threatened to expose wide-scale corruption in French football when he goes on trial for financial irregularities, reports AFP.

"I invented nothing in French football," he tells Le Monde on Friday. "Everything that existed before me is still going on."

Last week Le Monde reported that examining magistrate Pierre Phillipon's four-year investigation into fraud and false accounting at Marseille showed that 101 million francs (20 million dollars) had been diverted for rigging matches in the French league and in European competitions.

Tapie says former Budget Minister Michel Charasse interfered in the investigations only to ensure enquiries were carried out throughout French football and were not aimed solely at Olympique Marseille.

"I intend to name all the personalities in French football (club presidents, the league and federation presidents, advertising and sponsorship executives and broadcasters) during the trial," Tapie threatened.

Tapie says he invested 52 million francs (10 million dollars) of his own money into the club he took over in 1986. He stepped down in 1994 and in 1995 was given a two-year prison sentence for his part in the Marseille-Valenciennes match fixing which clinched the 1993 French championship for Marseille.

Not timed well for Steffi

MANNHEIM, Germany, Jan 11: Steffi Graf is set to hear the verdict of her father's much-publicised German tax trial during the climax in this month's Australian Open, reports Reuter.

A judge trying Peter Graf on allegations of evading millions of dollars of tax on the world tennis number one's earnings said on Friday he expected a ruling on January 24, the Friday before the final weekend of the Grand Slam.

Peter Graf, who has managed the player's financial affairs since she was a teenager is accused along with family tax adviser Joachim Ekardt of evading more than 10 million dollars of German tax on Steffi's earnings between 1989 and 1993.

Graf, 58, was arrested in August 1995 and went on trial last September. He was released on bail in November after spending 15 months behind bars.

Graf herself remains under investigation in the affair which has put her under huge emotional stress in the last year especially when her father was in prison.

But investigators have said suspicions against her are not as serious as those against her father. The world number one says she entrusted her financial affairs to him from an early age.

Hewitt's bonus

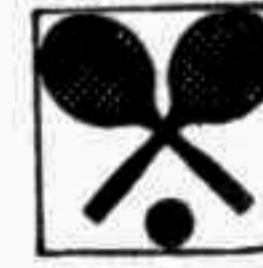
MELBOURNE, Jan 11: Fifteen-year-old Lleyton Hewitt will have to miss this week's Australian junior hardcourt championship to meet another pressing engagement — playing in the main draw of the Australian Open, reports AFP.

The Australian teenager, who received a wildcard into the Open qualifying, beat Briton Mark Petchey, 11 years his senior, 6-1, 6-4 in the final qualifying round here today.

The reward for the Adelaide youngster is a first round match with two-time French Open champion Sergi Bruguera from Spain.

"I feel great but I still have a job to do. I still have another tournament to play," Hewitt said. "It will be a very good experience... I am very excited. It has been a dream."

Stranger awaits Sampras



MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 11 (AP): Pete Sampras had never heard of Dinu Pescariu until Saturday afternoon — but he will be finding out all he can about the 22-year-old Romanian over the next 48 hours.

The world's top-ranked player, drawn to face a qualifier in the first round of the Australian Open, learned that Pescariu will fill that role.

"The Romanian is ranked 169 in the world and has never been higher than 133 in five years as a professional. Making the second round of the French Open in 1991 is the highlight of his Grand Slam career."

"I don't know anything about him — nothing," Sampras admitted after losing to fellow American Michael Chang in Saturday's final of the Colonial Classic exhibition at Kooyong.

"I'll hopefully find something about him over the next day or two, what kind of player he is, and what he does. It's always difficult to play someone you've never seen."

"I've been in the situation before and you just have to work your way into the match, but hopefully I'll find some things out over the next day or two."

"You need every advantage you can get out there as far as strategy is concerned, as far as what he likes to do."

Sampras, who won the Australian Open in 1994, said he was not perturbed by his loss to Chang in the exhibition.

"It would have been nice to win, but the main thing is that I feel fresh and ready to go on Monday," he said. "I've achieved that — so I'm happy."

Chang, the No. 2 seed who will face lucky loser Kris Gossens of Belgium in the first round of the Open, won the Colonial Classic for the third straight year.

He will be aiming to win his first Grand Slam event since the 1989 French Open after making the semis in Melbourne in 1995 and the final last year, where he lost to Boris Becker.

"If there is one word to sum up my career it has been perseverance," he said. "If I come up short I'm going to try again. I'm not afraid of falling short and I'm not afraid of picking myself up again."

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try, try, and try again."

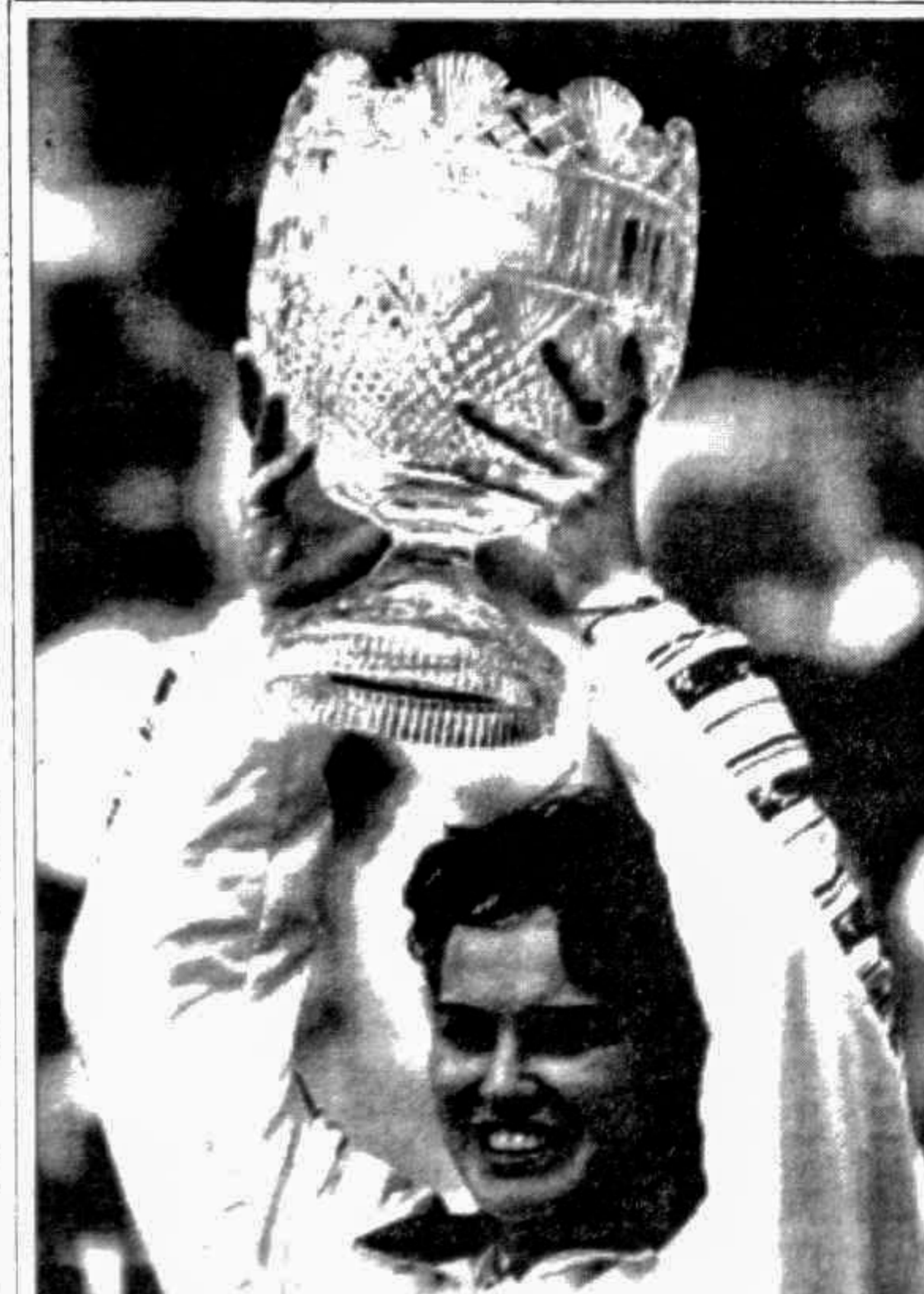
Defending champion Becker is relishing his return to the Australian, where he won last year after a five-year Grand

'Buster' beats Pepeli

UNCASVILLE, Connecticut, Jan 11: Former Unified world heavyweight boxing champion James "Buster" Douglas, the first man to beat Mike Tyson, won a unanimous decision over fellow American Rocky Pepeli here Friday, reports AFP.

All three judges awarded Douglas the 10-round bout by a 100-89 margin. Douglas knocked Pepeli down in round six and opened a cut over Pepeli's left eye in the last round.

Hard work in the gym got me through it," Douglas said. "I felt really good. He made me work."



Swiss tennis prodigy Martina Hingis holds aloft the trophy after beating Jennifer Capriati of the United States in the final of the Sydney International at White City yesterday. — Reuter/UNB photo