

Atletico run after Marcel

MADRID, May 27: AC Milan midfielder Marcel Desailly, chased by English Premiership side Arsenal, has been offered three million dollars a year, after tax, by Spanish side Atletico Madrid, who are keen to link him with English side Middlesbrough's Brazilian midfielder Juninho, reports AFP.

Atletico said they had bid 12 million dollars for the AC Milan player who left Olympique Marseille four years ago for seven million dollars.

Desailly's weekly wages at Atletico, who have offered him a three-year contract, would be 57,000 dollars after tax.

Atletico say they have bid 13 million dollars for Juninho, who was offered 65,000 dollars a week, after tax, in a four-year deal.

However, English champions Manchester United were reportedly ready to pay Middlesbrough 26 million dollars for the 24-year-old Brazilian to replace French star Eric Cantona, who has announced his retirement.

Juninho was a 5.75-million-dollar buy from Sao Paulo 18 months ago.

Goran shatters Betis' dream

MADRID, May 27: Valencia's Croatian striker Goran Vlaovic's 68th minute equaliser in the 1-1 draw with Real Betis on Monday ended Betis' hopes of a Champions' League place and handed it to Barcelona, reports AFP.

Betis, who took the lead through midfielder Jose Luis Canas in the 9th minute, can only get 83 points if they win their last three matches while Barcelona, coached by former England national supremo Bobby Robson, already have 84.

Valencia, coached by former Real Madrid boss Jorge Valdano, equalised when Argentinian playmaker Ariel Ortega crossed and Vlaovic, who has made a miraculous recovery from a brain haemorrhage two years ago, slotted it home for his ninth of the season.

Betis' consolation is a place in the Cup Winners' Cup competition next season as they face Barcelona in the Spanish Cup final at the end of June.

Argentine squad for Copa America

BUENOS AIRES, May 27: Argentina national football squad selected here on Monday for Copa America tournament to be played in Bolivia from June 11-29, reports AFP.

Goalkeepers: Leonardo Ojeda, Ignacio Gonzalez, Carlos Roa.

Defenders: Raul Cardozo, Eduardo Berizzo, Jorge Martinez, Mauricio Pellegrino, Mauricio Pineda, Pablo Rotchen, Nelson Vivas.

Middlefielders: Sergio Berti, Rodolfo Cardoso, Marcelo Gallardo, Claudio Hrusal, Roberto Monserat, Gustavo Lopez, Gustavo Zapata, Christian Bassadas.

Forwards: Jose Luis Calderon, Julio Cruz, Marcelo Delgado, Martin Posse.

Ronaldo stays at Barca?

MADRID, May 27: Agents for Brazilian striker Ronaldo started negotiating a new contract on Monday with his Spanish club Barcelona, reports Reuter.

Ronaldo, who has been linked to a number of Italian and English clubs, said last week he would disclose his future plans on Monday.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Green Delta First Division hockey league: (Venue: Hockey Stadium) Wari Club vs Victoria SC (2:30 pm)

Mohammedan SC vs Bangladesh Railway (4 pm)

Danish Third Division cricket league:

Eastern SC vs Progoti SS (DCS) Young Pegasus A vs Young Cricketers (Uttara) Maghabazar JS vs New Eaglets (MOS)

Third Division football league: (Venue: Rajku ground) Maghabazar KC vs Fire Service (2:45 pm)

Lalbagh SC vs Purbachal Parishad (4:30 pm)

Cute Premier handball league: Narinda Progoti Boys vs West Jatrabari KC (3 pm)

Manjil KC vs Old Ideals (4 pm)

Steffi begins in style



PARIS, May 27: Defending champion Steffi Graf, who has been struggling to park in as much match play as possible after her long knee injury lay-off, opened her 1997 French Open campaign with straight-set wins on the Roland Garros Centre-Court today, reports AFP.

Graf, bidding for her sixth title here, produced a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Argentina's Paola Suarez — although she had to survive some late match nerves after leading 6-1, 5-1.

The 27-year-old German champion, who lost her world number-one ranking to Swiss teenager Martina Hingis in March while she was out of action nursing recurring knee and back injuries, set off like an express train.

She pocketed the first set in just 22 minutes and looked poised to complete the match in double-quick time when she raced 5-1 clear in the second.

A score of unforced errors, half-a-dozen double faults and a lapse of concentration put the South American briefly back in the picture — but Graf steadied and served out to love to complete her victory in 54 minutes.

Graf, who won her first title since her return at Strasbourg at the weekend when she defeated 15-year-old Croatian Mirjana Lucic in the final, is second-seed for her 15th appearance at the championships.

She now plays either France's 1996 world junior champion Amelie Mauresmo or Jolene Watanabe of the United States for a place in the third-round.

One player in even more of a

hurry was Spain's Virginia Ruano-Pascual who handed out a 6-0, 6-0 defeat in 42 minutes to compatriot Angeles Montolio.

On Monday, three-time winner Monica Seles raced through to the second round when she overwhelmed Miho Saeki of

Japan 6-0, 6-3.

Seles now plays either Sarah Pitkowiak of France or Francesca Lubiani of Italy for a place in the third second round.

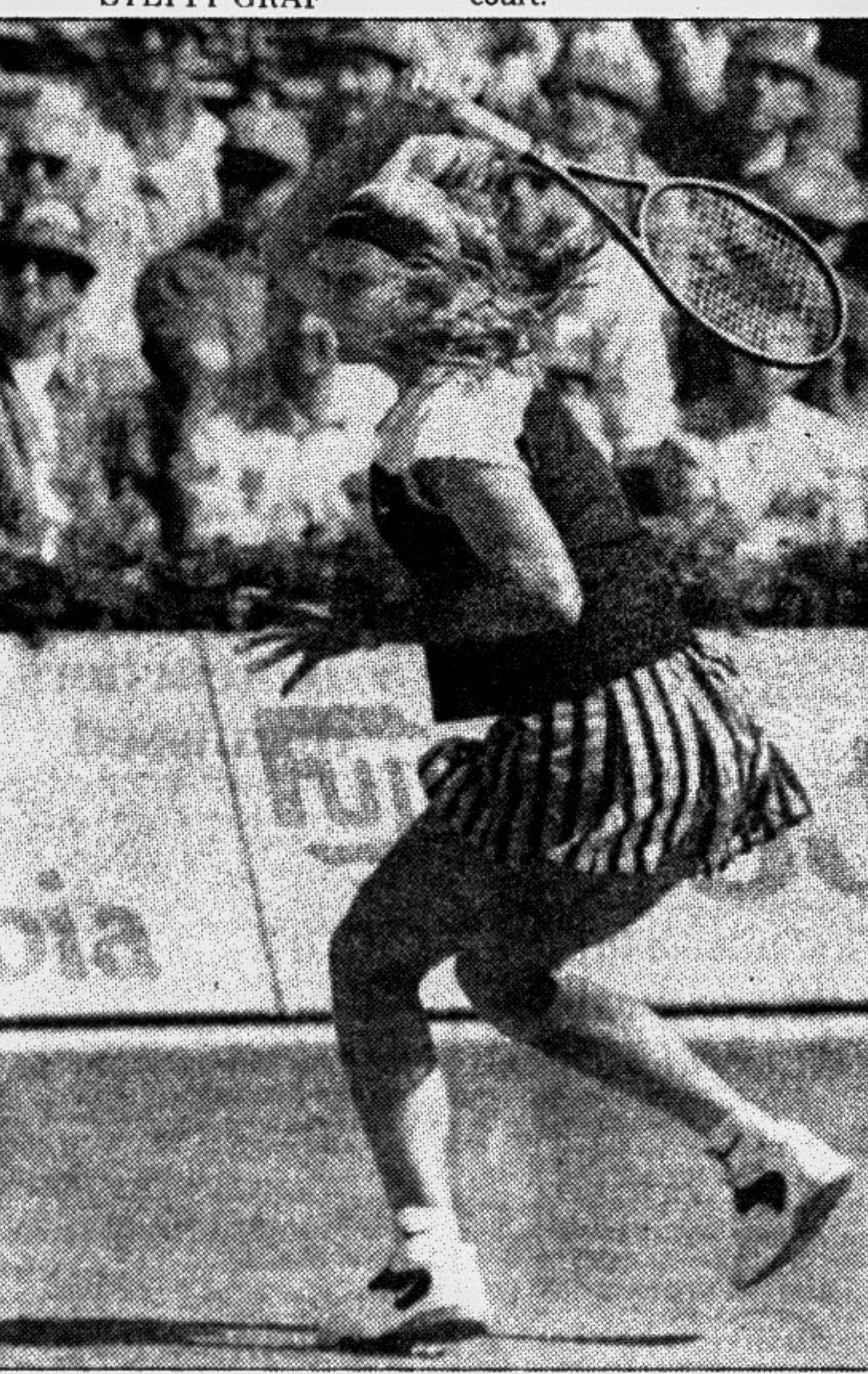
Thomas Muster, the 1995 champion here but slumping badly on clay this year, pulled out a tough five-setter against Germany's Marc-Kevin Goeller, winning it 4-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-2, 6-7 (2-7), 6-4.

The fifth-seed Austrian was down a break in the fifth at 2-4 before winning four straight games.

12th-seeded Alberto Berasategui — a 1994 finalist — had to retire in the fifth set with cramps in both legs. The Spaniard was down 1-2 to Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine.

Tenth seed Mary Pierce of France needed three sets to beat Russian Tatiana Panova. The effort wasn't good enough to please the French fans; some booed her as she walked off court.

STEFFI GRAF



ATP Tour's top money makers

MONACO, May 27: (Reuters) Leading prize-money winners (in dollars) issued by the ATP Tour today:

1. Thomas Muster	801,584
2. Michael Chang	780,099
3. Alex Corretja	766,513
4. Pete Sampras	762,711
5. Marcelo Rios	756,848
6. Goran Ivanisevic	656,985
7. Albert Costa	589,903
8. Felix Mantilla	568,683
9. Andrei Medvedev	565,350
10. Todd Woodbridge	530,139
11. Carlos Moya	512,704
12. Sergi Bruguera	456,715
13. Mark Woodforde	426,319
14. Richard Krajicek	405,355
15. Marc Philippoussis	401,846
16. Jonas Bjorkman	389,461
17. Jim Courier	362,110
18. Alberto Berasategui	344,480
19. Marc Rosset	343,753
20. Javi Sanchez	329,805

ED JOHNSON

Stage set for Sammer



PARIS, May 27: Matthias Sammer, who swapped his Lada for a Mercedes as his career in the west flourished following the destruction of the Berlin Wall, could achieve yet further acclaim for Borussia Dortmund in Wednesday's European Cup final against Juventus, reports AFP.

The 29-year-old sweeper, whom may likened to Franz Beckenbauer as he inspired Germany to the Euro '96 title in England last year, has been worth every penny to current club Dortmund, Bundesliga champions in both 1995 and 1996.

Despite his continual injuries this year, Sammer's presence at key times has been important in Ottmar Hitzfeld's quest for Dortmund's second continental title after winning the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1996.

The reunification of the two Germans on October 3, 1990 meant Sammer was at the disposal of German coach Berti Vogts, who found Sammer's talent in the German team.

Kirsten, who was a team-

said to each other. If they had found out, we would probably never have played football again," said Kirsten.

Sammer wriggled out of his close shave with the authorities with a 1000-dollar fine, two month's wages, to prove that may be his father's advice to give little away was valuable.

On the football field, he also gives little away, and Dortmund will hope his undoubted talent and courageous heart will provide a cornerstone to a victory over Juventus.

"A lot of spadework has been done in this regard, we are hopeful Sir Gary will be available to us," said Dhammika Ranatunga, chief executive of the Sri Lankan cricket board and younger brother of national captain Arjuna.

"I have been speaking to the players to know their opinion and most of them have jumped at the idea," he said.

Ranatunga and Sobers are in Calcutta for the Independence Cup finals between Sri Lanka and Pakistan, but a final decision is not expected till next week when the islanders begin their first tour of the West Indies.

Sobers coached Sri Lanka before they gained Test status in 1981 and was largely responsible for guiding the experienced duo of Arjuna Ranatunga and Aravinda de Silva in their formative years.

Yardley, who took over as Sri Lankan coach last year from Australian compatriot Dave Whatmore, welcome the contacts with Sobers.

"It will be great for both Sri Lankan cricket and me. It will be great working together with a living legend," the former Test off-spinner said.

"I took over from Whatmore primarily to produce some off-spinners for Sri Lanka and look after the juniors. If Sir Gary joined the national team it would be easier for me to focus on the youngsters."

Tickets would be sold at financial institutions for 100 yen (0.86 dollars) with winnings pegged to the percentage of correct guesses on outcomes of twice-weekly J-league matches.

Several hours later, the Stasi summoned the players. Sammer said of the incident: They wanted to know that we

M SAMMER



Sport

Lippi ladies' choice

PARIS, May 27: Juventus coach Marcello Lippi, somewhat flattered in the past for his silver hair and blue eyes, has just been voted Italy's most charming man in a survey among women by a business magazine, reports AFP.

Explaining his success in the poll, designed to find "the man any women would go crazy for," Lippi said: "I don't think it's anything to do with physical attraction."

"A lot of young people today feel insecure and it could be that I provide them with that missing sense of security."

Lippi has achieved remarkable success with impressively tough decisions as top players were unloaded to make way for young blood.

Star players such as Roberto Baggio, Gianluca Vialli and Fabrizio Ravanelli were all let go while in peak form yet he introduced new players successfully into the side.

"We have to change things all the time in our lives to move with the time. It's the same with football. You have to think ahead. If you don't prepare, you won't be ready."

Lippi might only have been an average player for Sampdoria and was twice sacked at Siena and Cesena, but he has managed what Helder Herrera did for Inter Milan in the 60s and what Arrigo Sacchi did for AC Milan in the late 80s.

He has built a dream footbal squad in his own style.

And his pragmatic style, to adapt tactics and team selections to each match, was a different way of succeeding to Herrera's severely disciplined approach to life and football.

In his autobiography published this week, Lippi describes himself as a master motivator despite not being easy to get on with off the pitch, and as proof, players in the twilight of their years keep performing well.

Though Juventus are the best team in the world on results, Lippi is uncomfortable with the tag.

"It is not the way we think of ourselves. Some of our results have gone very well in the last year, we have beaten Ajax three times for example, but it is not necessarily a verdict on the way we play," Lippi said.

Juventus also beat AC Milan 6-1 in the San Siro stadium last month to clearly gauge their quality.

Lippi praises his French players Didier Deschamps and Zinedine Zidane for their contribution to the squad.

MONICA SELES

PARIS, May 27: (AP) She's a three-time champion and former No. 1 player, but nobody's talking about her.

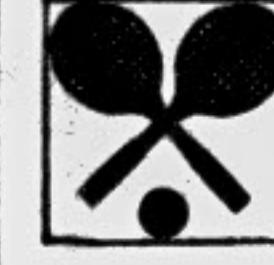
Monica Seles may be the forgotten woman at this year's French Open.

That was the day a 38-year-old German stabbed her in the back during a quarterfinal in Hamburg, Germany. Though she came back after a two-year break to win the 1996 Australian Open, she's never regained the form she had before the stabbing.

Plagued by injuries, Seles has yet to win a tournament to this year, losing in finals to Hingis and Jana Novotna.

Although a shoulder injury that dogged her throughout

Pete gets into his stride



PARIS, May 27: World number one Pete Sampras enjoyed a perfect start to his latest French Open quest on Monday

with a first round performance which dispelled any complacency among his specialist clay-court rivals, reports Reuter.

Sampras, the top seed, brushed aside the potentially awkward local challenge of Fabrice Santoro 6-3, 7-5, 6-1 and showed sufficient authority to suggest he could yet collect the only Grand Slam title he has never won.

Santoro has beaten recent French champions Thomas Muster and Sergi Bruguera this year, but was never allowed into his stride by the American who scarcely looked like a man without a prior win on his favourite surface this year.

"It was a good start for me on clay," acknowledged Sampras, beaten twice on the surface by Santoro. "It's a tough draw when you play a Frenchman on Centre Court but you just have to go out there and play."

"This is the only tournament

I haven't won so I'll do whatever I can do win here. It's the only thing left for me to achieve."

The French open, however,

continues to pose Sampras, who has nine Grand Slam singles titles, difficulties he doesn't face in any other major championship.

"The French is tougher on the mind and the body. It doesn't come quite so easy for me on clay. It's not really tenis, it's more of a fight."

in confidence and gave his opponent little room for manoeuvre.

The size of the crowd indicated what French spectators thought might happen, but once Sampras had taken the first set in 32 minutes, he grew steadily

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