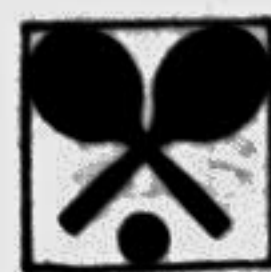


# 'I'm maybe too young to win this title'

From Tawfiq Aziz Khan



**LONDON, July 6:** Women's tennis has come a long way since the days of Charlotte 'Lottie' Dod in 1887. Charlotte, the youngest women's champion ever in the history of Wimbledon, will ever remain so and Hingis already youngest this century will also have no rivals as new rules for the women's age limit for turning professionals and playing in Grand Slam events are being framed by the WTA.

Charlotte was a champion of her time but Martina was the harbinger of the 21st century. Came Andrea Jaeger, Jennifer Capriati, Gabriela Sabatini, Tracy Austin, Monica Seles, Steffi Graf, Chris Evert, Pam Shriver and many others since 1980 — a highly talented battery of bubbling teenagers courting the fringes of the coveted championships. But the final honour had to be earned by none other than Martina Hingis, the player of the future.

Hingis was naturally elated and she did not make any fuss about it. She was candid, straightforward in replying to questions by the press in the post-match press conference.

Following is verbatim of the conference.

**Q: I was like, wow, what can I do, just — I'm going to lose the first set, but then I try to hold my serve, and try to break her once, and just try to make her a little tired that she just knows I can also play a little tennis and just pass her sometimes and do something, but that was really hard.**

**Q: Can you talk about ....**

**A:** Then I felt like a beginner out there in the first set. She just was the leader in this match.

**Q: Did you think you might lose at that time?**

**A:** Well, not really, I just couldn't really believe that she can play that great, especially on that surface, that she doesn't miss one ball. She just went everywhere, and especially at the net, all these little drop shots she made. I was like surprised, wow, that is a great ball.

**Q: Is this your greatest feeling so far in tennis?**

**A:** I don't know. It might be that I'm maybe too young to win this title, I think when I stand there, there was a great atmo-

sphere out there, and the crowd was just unbelievable, and I felt this was one of my biggest chances to win this tournament, and I really did it and maybe tomorrow I will realise that I won this tournament. But it was great.

**Q: What was going through your mind when you were going around and kissing the crowd?**

**A:** I saw that a couple of times Steffi was doing it on TV when I watched her, so I was just trying to make the same thing, and all the people, they stand up and I almost felt to cry because it really happened to me.

**Q: When you saw Steffi do that, did you say to yourself "maybe some day I will do that"?**

**A:** Well, hopefully, yes. I was afraid it's so far away, but it's like this is my fifth time to be here, twice as a junior and I still watched her on TV at the finals, because I wasn't here in the second week, and especially I can say I only lost to Steffi at this tournament and she was a champion later on. So I was looking forward to having lost to her, maybe when she's not here I can win it too.

**Q: Can you talk about the feeling you had when you broke her in the second set, and did that start to turn things around, do you think?**

**A:** Yes, that was very important for me, especially in the second set, I was always leading. I was always holding my serve and tried just to break her once, and I didn't get that many chances to break her, not at all

that's it.

**Q: Martina, you just said that maybe you are too young to win this title. Is it kind of scary for you, because you've already won Wimbledon?**

**A:** Well, I think this time it was a really good chance for me to win this tournament, because I was seeded number 1 in such a big tournament, and I made it also at the finals at the French Open, but there I just knew I wasn't in great shape and this time it's like I could do it. But Jana must think too the same thing about Steffi. She beat better players than I did, but all of a sudden all the players which were in my half of the draw, they lost, so I didn't even beat one of the seeded players to get to the finals.

**Q: Why did you change your racket in the third set after the second game?**

**A:** Because it was too loose, so I tried — because I was still in a good shape, and I didn't have the control any more over all the balls. I just tried to go for it.

**Q: You seemed to check the racket on the ground in temper just before that point. What was going through your mind there?**

**A:** Well, if I throw my racket, I'm for sure not happy about what I'm doing.

**Q: What did the Duke and Duchess say to you? Anything special besides "well done"?**

**A:** No. That I'm the youngest champion and that everyone is proud about me, and that was great, a new champion.

**Q: Do you want to play like Jana once on grass, I mean in the future?**

**A:** I'm a different player. We're like both — she was the more aggressive player, and I was the defensive one, and it was like two different tennis came together at this finals, and, I mean, we, both of us, we could win it, I mean, just I did it this time. She could be the winner next time. It's very hard to say, and I just — today I had the better control over my balls than she did.

**Q: Were you nervous at any time during the match, at the beginning, or later on, and do you think that Novotna was nervous during the match?**

**A:** I mean, you're always nervous before a final, especially, you know, I gave myself pretty big chances to win it this time, and I was leading like 4-2, and, like, now I've got a chance to really make it, because I was losing 2-0, and then she also had a point to go up 3-0, and then all of a sudden I changed everything, and I start to control the ball much better, and I was winning 4-2 and 5-2 and then I was kind of loosened up a little bit and I gave her the shots, and then I was ready again.

**Q: Do you think she showed her nervousness during the match at all?**

**A:** I don't think so. I think just at the most important points I served very well and I also played pretty good returns. I didn't give her the chance to play well or bad.



MARTINA HINGIS

**Q: Martina, 16, Wimbledon champion. How does that feel?**

**A:** Great. What can I say? It's like a dream come true, really, and, I mean, when I was, like, leading 5-2 in the third, or already when I made a break, so I felt like, come on, I've got to take it home, and I've got a great chance. So, I mean, that was a great match we both played. I didn't play very bad in the first set, but she just didn't give me any opportunities to pass her. She was like all over the net, and that was a great match.

**Q: Was there a moment of change in the match, or did you gradually just start to find your distance?**

**A:** Well, I don't think I played bad in the first set. I mean, I just wasn't that — I just didn't have the control as I started to have in the second and third set. But she just was really all over the net, and she served very well. She just didn't give me enough space for the returns, and I was like pretty in shock in the first set, because she returned well, and she was straight into the net, so that was pretty hard.

**Q: What were you doing at the end there? She seemed to be grabbing the trophy off you. What were you saying to each other, right at the very end, she grabbed the trophy from you?**

**A:** On the court, yes. "Do you want to give it to me?" I said, well, I mean she really should deserve to win one of the Grand Slam titles, I mean, on this surface, she's really hard. I mean, if she wouldn't lose that nerve against Steffi sometimes at this tournament. So she really deserves to win this title. And, I mean — but I was still lucky I won today.

**Q: What did you do different at 0-4 in the first set?**

sphere out there, the crowd was just unbelievable, and I felt this was one of my biggest chances to win this tournament, and I really did it and maybe tomorrow I will realise that I won this tournament. But it was great.

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Argentine players celebrating with the World Youth soccer trophy after beating Uruguay in the final in Kuala Lumpur on July 5. — AFP/UNB photo

## Gigi, Natasha win doubles crown

**LONDON, July 6:** Top-seeds Gigi Fernandez of the United States and Natasha Zvereva of Belarus won the women's doubles title at Wimbledon for a fourth time today when they beat sixth-seeds Nicole Arendt of the United States and Manon Bollegraf of the Netherlands 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, top-seed Daniel Elsner of Germany saw his junior 'Grand Slam' dream turn into a nightmare when he was beaten in the final 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) by 18-year-old South African Westley Whitehouse.

The 18-year-old Austrian-based German had won the junior singles title at the Australian and French Opens this year.

**The only player ever to win all four junior titles in one year was Stefan Edberg in 1983.**

## Argentina retain title

**KUALA LUMPUR, July 6:** World Youth champions Argentina successfully defended their under-20 title in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, beating South American rivals Uruguay 2-1 in a fiercely contested final, reports Reuter.

Argentina, the pre-tournament favourites, came from behind to lift the trophy for the third time and in doing so became the first team side to defend the title since Portugal in 1991.

Captain Roman Riquelme was presented the trophy by FIFA president Joao Havelange after both players and officials shed tears following the emotion-charged match.

Esteban Cambiasso levelled the score in the 24th minute, 10 minutes after the Uruguayans took the lead courtesy of a curling free kick by Pablo Garcia Perez.

A few minutes before half-time, Diego Quitana took Argentina to an unbeatable lead.

"It was a very tough game," said Argentina coach Jose Nestor Pekerman. "Uruguay are a great team and this match was a classic but today we had the good fortune to win."

"We knew the game would be won in the midfield and that the team with the strongest midfield would have the advantage."

"We were able to strike back and hold on to our lead in the second half. We changed our tactics a little and we were able to control (Uruguayan strikers) Zalayeta and Olivera."

Pekerman, who also coached Argentina to victory in Qatar two years ago, added: "There is nothing in the world like the satisfaction of winning a second World Championship. I'm very proud for my country and very humble that I could do it twice."

For Victor Pua, the coach for Uruguay, it was a day to rue missed opportunities.

"When you make two mistakes they can turn out to be expensive," he said, referring to Argentina's two goals.

"This is part of football and the team which scores the most goals is the winner. We had the best of the first half and we were in the situation where we could have been leading 2-0 or 3-0."

Earlier, the Republic of Ireland took third place by beating Ghana 2-1.

- CHAMPS SO FAR**
- 1977: Soviet Union
  - 1979: Argentina
  - 1981: West Germany
  - 1983: Brazil
  - 1985: Brazil
  - 1987: Yugoslavia
  - 1989: Portugal
  - 1991: Portugal
  - 1993: Brazil
  - 1995: Argentina
  - 1997: Argentina

## Becker to go for bigger family!

**BERLIN, July 6:** Germans reacted with shock and regret Friday to the news that national hero Boris Becker had said farewell to Wimbledon but he said he was relieved to have the decision behind him and planned to concentrate on his family, reports AP.

"Now I'd like to have a bigger family," Becker told RTL television. "Three, four children — however, it's not all up to me."

Becker, 29, and his wife, Barbara, have a 3-year-old son, Noah.

In another television interview, Becker told SAT1 he'd been preparing his announcement since being defeated in the first round at the Australian Open in January.

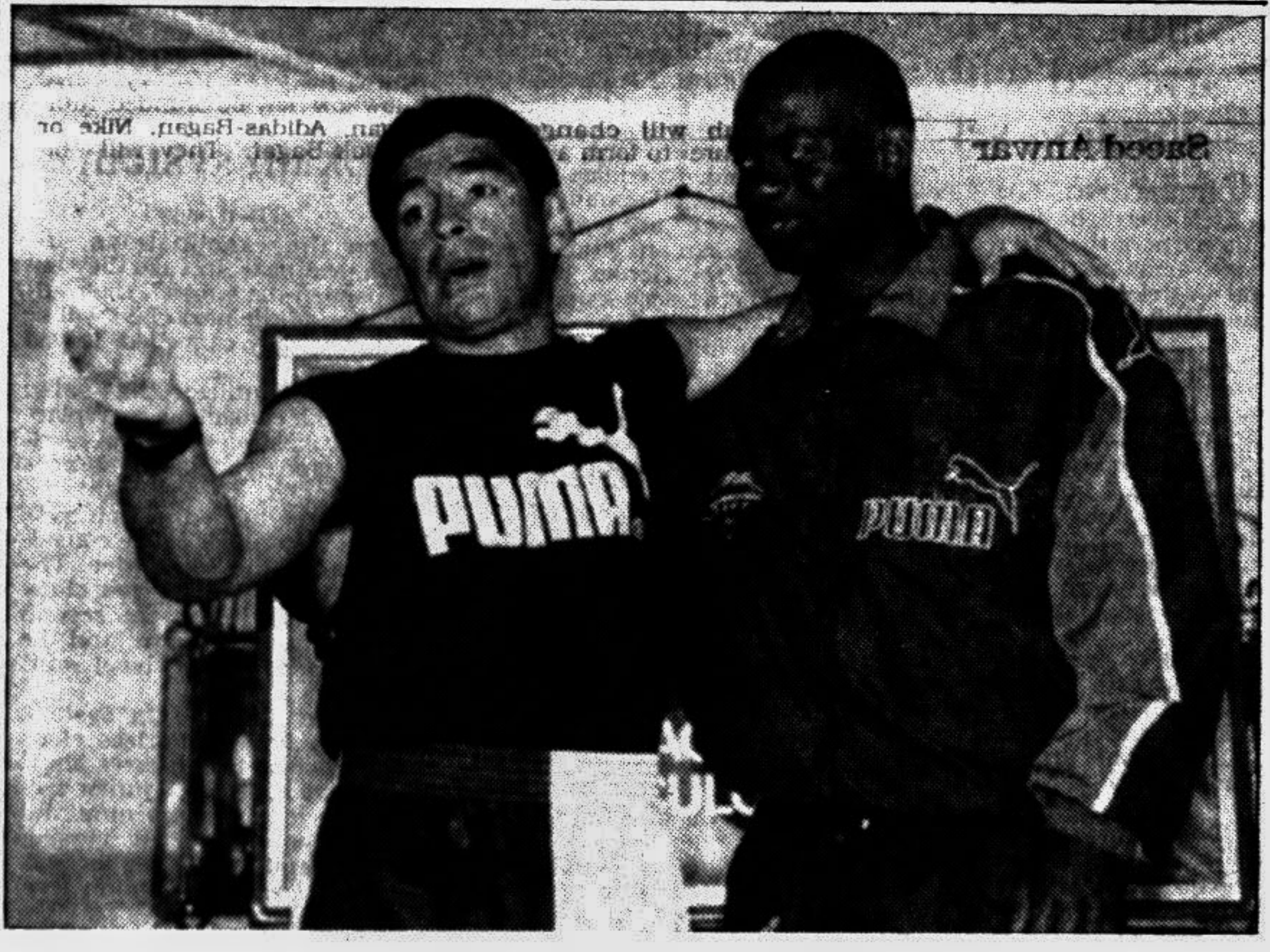
"My wife knew I want to quit since the Grand Slam tournament in Melbourne," Becker said. "Then I told her, 'Girl, now we have to show that we can somehow make it over the next six months to Wimbledon, because I can't go on like this.'"

"Now this pressure has been taken off my shoulders, and that's a very pleasant feeling. I love the sport. I love tennis. Nobody has to force me to do it. That's why I would like to stay with it as long as possible and then sometime later quit entirely."

Becker's announcement was front page news across Germany, where he is admired even among non-sports fans for his fiery will to win and classy demeanor.

Under the headline "We'll all miss Boris," a Berlin tabloid, BZ, said it would take a long time for Germans to grasp that their hero could be tennis without him.

"Becker was the heart of our tennis," the newspaper wrote. "Boris was passion, excitement, fascination."



Former Argentine football great Diego Maradona poses with his trainer disgraced Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson at a press conference in Buenos Aires on July 5. — AP/UNB photo

## Maradona feels perfect

**BUENOS AIRES, July 6:** Diego Maradona says he feels physically like he did in 1990, the year he led Argentina into their second consecutive World Cup final, reports agencies.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference Saturday after two weeks of training with Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson in Toronto, Maradona said he was in "good" shape and "All set to show what I can do on the pitch."

"I'm returning because I want to be champion with Boca Juniors again," said Maradona, who appeared with Johnson at the news conference.

Maradona, who won his first league championship in 1980 with Boca, was unsure, however, whether he would return in a July 13 match against Racing in the current season as he had vowed to do in Canada.

"I want to do it, but the decision rests with (Boca coach Hector) Veira, whom I haven't talked to yet," he said.

Looking healthy and trim — he says his weight is 77 kilos (170 pounds), down from 88 kilos (194 pounds) from two months ago, Maradona displayed his stamina by running for several minutes on a belt.

"I owe it to Ben (Johnson), the fastest man in the world," he said. "He gave me stamina. I've never been stronger in my life."

Maradona, who last played a professional match 11 months ago, then stripped off and to the background music of the Oscar-winning film 'Chariots of Fire' worked on a treadmill for 18 minutes.

"I am doing this just so all the Argentines who love me can see that I have not cheated," Maradona said.

Maradona, who won the South American player of the year award three times, said Johnson had provided him with extra speed and stamina.

Johnson is facing his own comeback attempt. He is asking a Canadian court to declare his lifetime ban from competing — a penalty imposed by the IAAF for a second positive drug test — illegal.

"Maradona is a fun guy to work with. Age is no problem," Johnson said. "He believes, in his heart and soul he can be the best in the world again, and he'll do it."

Johnson, 35, was stripped of his Olympic 100-metre gold medal in 1988 and suspended for two years for testing positive for steroids. The IAAF banned him for life after he failed another drug test in 1993. The Canadian court is expected to rule on his case on July 21.

"I pray to God, (it) will forgive Ben," Maradona said. "He has real talent. He's an animal."

Johnson is hoping a favourable court ruling will influence an IAAF council, scheduled to meet July 27.

With Maradona as captain, Argentina won their second World Cup title in Mexico, in 1986, and lost the final to Germany in 1990.

Maradona, 36, was suspended by FIFA for 15 months in 1991 after testing positive for cocaine use following an Italian league game with Napoli. He was thrown out of the 1994 World Cup and suspended for using banned stimulants.

In April, Maradona signed a deal reportedly worth 50,000 dollars per match to rejoin Boca, his fifth attempt to return to the game. He said at the time he would need a month to return to fitness to play.

He trained first in southern Argentina and then went to Canada in mid-June to train with Johnson.

In earlier comeback attempts, Maradona left the team saying the club's morning training sessions were scheduled too early.

In March, Maradona turned down an offer from Boca, saying he refused to wear the club's Nike-sponsored jersey. He has a personal contract with German sporting goods company Puma.

The temperamental star particularly objected to two white lines added to the blue-and-gold jersey by Nike.

## Top Ugandan footballer arrested

**KAMPALA, July 6:** Ugandan police have arrested the only Ugandan ever to play professional football in Europe for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl, local newspapers reported Saturday, reports AFP.

Majid Musisi, 29, who is based in Turley, where he has been playing for Bursaspor on loan from French Second Division side Rennes, was arrested on Friday.

Musisi, who is accused of raping his fiancée's sister was due to fly back to Turkey on Sunday after a month-long holiday in Uganda.

## Khalid keeps WBA belt

**CASABLANCA, July 6:** Frenchman Khalid Rahlou retained his World Boxing Association light-welterweight title here on Saturday with a seventh-round stoppage of American Marty Jakubowski, reports AFP.

Rahlou put the American down three times in the seventh to win on the third-knockdown rule.

It was the 30th victory of 31-year-old Rahlou's career.

## Patuakhali football

**PATUAKHALI, July 6:** The Deputy Commissioner Gold Cup football tournament began here on Saturday, reports UNB.

In the opener, Jhalakathi district defeated Kalapara thana 2-1. The Final will be held on July 19.

Thirteen teams are taking part in the tournament being played on the knockout basis.

## Venables' boys blank NZ

**SYDNEY, July 6:** Australia mopped up New Zealand 2-0 in their second leg World Cup Oceania football qualifier here today to advance to the final elimination phase for next year's finals in France, reports AFP.

The Australians, under former England manager Terry Venables, won the first leg 3-0 in Auckland last Saturday to finish the home-and-away series 5-0 winners on aggregate.

Australia will now play the fourth-placed Asian team in the final regional eliminator in November for a place in France.

It was the 11th win in 11 matches for Venables since taking charge of the Australian team.

Auxerre midfielder Ned Zelic got Australia off to a rousing start with a rocket 22-metre volley past New Zealand goalkeeper Jason Batty in the sixth minute, but the expected goal avalanche did not eventuate on a drizzling evening after the original leg had been washed out on Saturday.

Australia spurned several scoring chances, most notably Cremonese striker John Aloisi, who had three chances to score in the first-half.

It took Australia until the 54th minute to score again through 33-year-old Hiroshima Sanfrece forward Graham Arnold, who lobbed over Batty after a deep kick had eluded two New Zealand defenders.

The Kiwis, who went into the match weakened by the loss of their world class star Wynton Rufer, fellow striker Vaughan Coveny and suspended midfielder Chris Jackson, battled well and continued to take the game to Australia although they were on a lost cause.

Australia lost Glasgow Rangers defender Craig Moore in the 31st minute with an aggravation of a rib injury he incurred in the Auckland tie.

Moore also received a yellow card for a crude 17th minute challenge on Nik Viljoen.

Zelic was the pick of the Australians with his passing and running from the midfield, while Arnold atoned for his sloppy finishing in Auckland to score Australia's second and ran himself into the ground before he was substituted by Venables with 11 minutes left along with Aloisi.

Aston Villa goalkeeper Mark Bosnich had not bothered throughout the match while West Ham United winger Stand Lazaridis stretched the Kiwi defence with his pace.

The eight overseas-based soccerers leave for their European clubs over the next few days.

## Argentine GM passes away

**MALAGA, Spain, July 6:** Miguel Najdorf, an Argentine chess grandmaster who was considered one of the great players of this century, has died of complications from surgery. He was 87, reports AP.

Najdorf had been staying at a hotel at the southern Spanish resort of Marbella before undergoing surgery on Friday, said Elena Gonzalez, a spokeswoman at Malaga University Hospital where Najdorf died late Friday.

She declined to provide further details, but Argentine news media said Najdorf died of heart disease.

Najdorf won 52 international tournaments and was known for creating what became known as the Najdorf variation of the Sicilian Defence.

The International Chess Federation champion, Anatoli Karpov, described Najdorf as "one of the greatest of all time. There will never be one like him again," the Russian told the Spanish state news agency, EFE.

Najdorf, who was born in Poland on April 15, 1910, came to Argentina in 1939 to play for his national team and escaped the Holocaust by not returning to his homeland.



Members of the Bangladesh team which left here for Japan yesterday to take part in the second Ladies' International Karate Cup. — Star photo