

Anis holds Mehdi

Sports Reporter

Table leader Mehdi Hasan lost his first half point in the qualifying phase of the United Insurance International Masters' chess tournament when he drew with Anisuzzaman at the NSC chess room yesterday.

But despite the day's disappointing outcome Mehdi kept his place atop the table with five and a half points on completion of the sixth round.

However, the drawn encounter left Anis in the crowded second position along with Aminul, Shahidul Amin, Sohel Chowdhury, Kazi Taherul Islam, Noor Uddin, Nasir Uddin and Mainuddin — all having collected five points each.

Davis Cup

SA squad unchanged

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 10: The South African tennis team to face Germany in the World Group first round of the Davis Cup in April will be identical to the one that came close to beating last year's eventual champions Sweden, selectors said Monday, reports AFP.

The team that will travel to Bremen, Germany, is Wayne Ferreira, Grant Stanford, Marcos Ondruska, Ellis Ferreira and David Adams, under the leadership of captain Denie Visser, the South African Tennis Association (SATA) announced.

The same squad came within a couple of points of ousting the Swedes in the 1997 tournament, with both the doubles and the final singles matches going five sets.

As the tie against Germany is also going to be played indoors and there is little change overall to the rankings, the selectors obviously felt no new faces should be added, "SATA said in a statement.

South Africa's junior Wimbledion champion Wesley Whitehouse will accompany the team as a practice partner and to "toughen up" for future competition.

SATA spokesman Bruce Davidson said the German team's inexperience in the Davis Cup tournament made it the best of the 15 qualifying teams for South Africa to play.

But this could change if Boris Becker was included in the team, he said.

Davidson said Germany's two highest-ranked singles players, Nicolas Kiefer and Tommy Haas, had not yet played Davis Cup matches.

Atletico abase Oviedo

MADRID, Feb 10: Two goals by Italian striker Christian Vieri helped Atletico Madrid sink mid-table Oviedo 4-1 on Monday to bring the team back into the Spanish league championship race, reports AP.

The victory edged Atletico up a place into No 4 in the 20-team division with 41 points, just four behind leaders FC Barcelona while Real Madrid have 44 and Real Sociedad 43.

Less than two months ago, Atletico trailed the leaders by up to 10 points and looked to be out of the race.

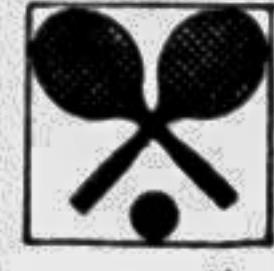
Atletico took the lead in the 25th minute when youngster Jose Mari Romero headed in from a corner by Yugoslav Milinko Pantic. Vieri got his first 10 minutes later and then in the 66th minute he made it 3-0. Panamanian striker Dely Valdes pulled one back for Oviedo in the 85th minute but Atletico nailed down the victory three minutes later with a goal by new Yugoslav signing Veljko Paunovic.

Vieri now stand third in the leading scorers table with 13 goals, one behind joint leaders, Luis Enrique Martinez and Rivaldo of Barcelona.

Atletico was the only team in the top five of the table to win this round with No 3 Real Sociedad drawing 1-1 against No 5 Athletic Bilbao on Saturday while Barcelona drew 1-1 against Tenerife and Real Madrid finished 2-2 against Deportivo de la Coruna on Sunday.

Other 24th-round results were: Mallorca 2, Compostela 1; Espanyol 0, Zaragoza 1; Betis 2; Merida 1; Salamanca 0, Celta 1; Valencia 1, Valladolid 2 and Sporting Gijon 2, Racing Santander 1.

Bangladesh baffle UAE



Hosts Bangladesh earned a well merited 3-0 win over United Arab Emirates to record their second consecutive victory in the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Group Four competition at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday, reports UNB.

Favourites Bangladesh who registered a 2-1 win against Oman in their inaugural match on Monday, smartly won all three matches — two singles and one doubles.

Local number two Dilip Pasia, who conceded defeat in a marathon singles against his rival from Oman, did not give any scope to Mahmoud Nader Al-Balooshi of UAE and handed him 6-2, 6-3 defeat in one of the two singles.

In the other singles, Bangladesh number one Shibu Lal outplayed Othman Alulama 6-0, 6-1.

In the doubles, Muammer Husain Khan in his first appearance in the tourney, pairing with Sheikh Moinuddin Wajidullah Jilani defeated Mahmoud Nader Al-Balooshi and Mohammed Alamri 6-3, 6-2.

Another title contenders Bahrain also piled up their second consecutive win in the seven-nation competition beating Oman by straight 3-0 matches at the same venue on the day.

Bahrain made a flying start in the tourney outplaying United Arab Emirates 3-0 on the opening day.

In the day's other match, Jordan got off on the right foot defeating Brunel by 3-0 matches after enjoying a rest day on Monday.

Muster advances

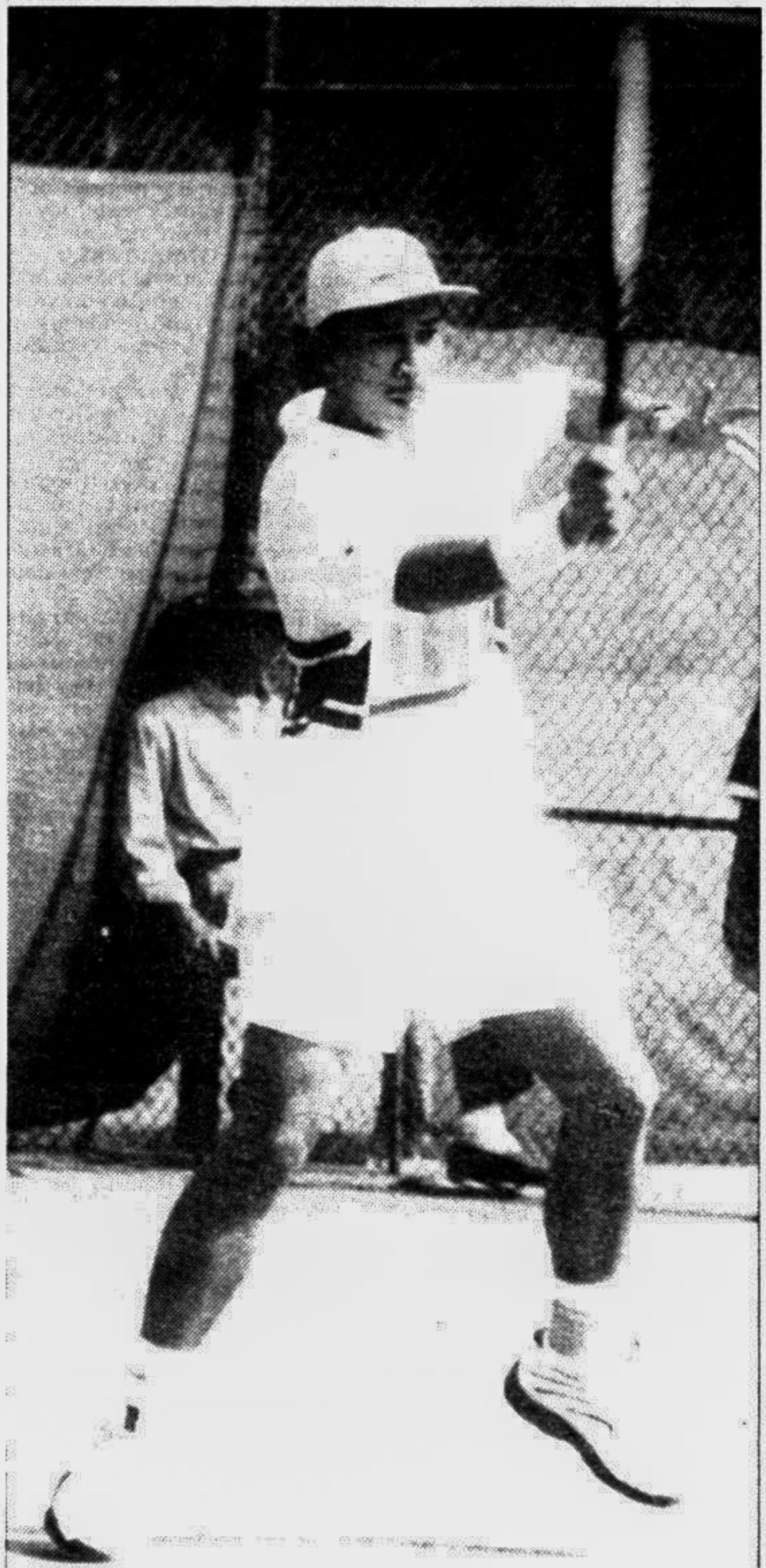
DUBAI, Feb 10: Thomas Muster survived a three-set thriller against Sandon Stolle to score his first victory of the year and advance into the second round of the Dubai Open on Monday, reports AFP.

The defending champion won in 2 hrs 9mins to secure a 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 victory against an opponent who claimed a shock win over him in the same event two years ago.

But the win was marred by controversy as Muster clashed with umpire Rudi Berger over a series of disputed line calls.

"When I have a bad match I have to come to the press and explain myself. This was a bad match for Rudi Berger," said seventh-seeded Muster, who received a warning early in the final.

In other matches, sixth-seed Feliu Mantilla of Spain beat Moroccan Karim Alami 6-4, 6-2. Magnus Norman of Sweden overcame Spaniard Albert Porte 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 and former champion Wayne Ferreira struggled to a 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-5 win over Javier Sanchez.



Aki Ismasufian Ibrahim of Brunel follows through after returning the ball against Fares Sabri Said Azzouni of Jordan during their singles tie in the Davis Cup at the Ramna Tennis Complex yesterday. — Star photo

Morocco, Zambia draw



BOBO DIOULASSO, Feb 10: Kalusha Bwalya's star shone brightly on the African stage again as he engineered a fightback that earned Zambia a 1-1 draw with Morocco in the African Nations' Cup on Monday, reports Reuters.

Bwalya was Africa's footballer of the year 10 years ago and showed his class a decade later to force a point for Zambia in a bruising encounter with the pre-tournament favourites.

Morocco, who will meet world champions Brazil in the World Cup later this year, came out storming in their opening Group D match and might have snatched the lead inside the first five minutes.

A goal eventually arrived after 37 minutes when Ahmed Bahia curled a delightful shot into the top corner of the net from the edge of the penalty area.

But Bwalya's experience and guile took centre stage after the break as he almost single-handedly took on the opposing team's early favourites.

GHANA 2, TUNISIA 0

In Ouagadougou, veteran Abedi Pele produced the outstanding individual performance of the tournament so far when he inspired Ghana to a 2-0

STANDINGS

Standings after the second day (Tabulated under: points, match won, set won, set lost, game won and game lost):

Country	Pts	MW	SW	SL	GW	GL
Bahrain	2	6	12	1	75	22
Bangladesh	2	5	11	2	73	33
Iraq	1	3	6	0	36	11
Jordan	1	3	6	1	44	23
Oman	0	1	3	11	38	76
Brunel	0	0	1	12	37	80
UAE	0	0	0	12	17	72

(Iraq and Jordan played one tie each)

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