

Sport

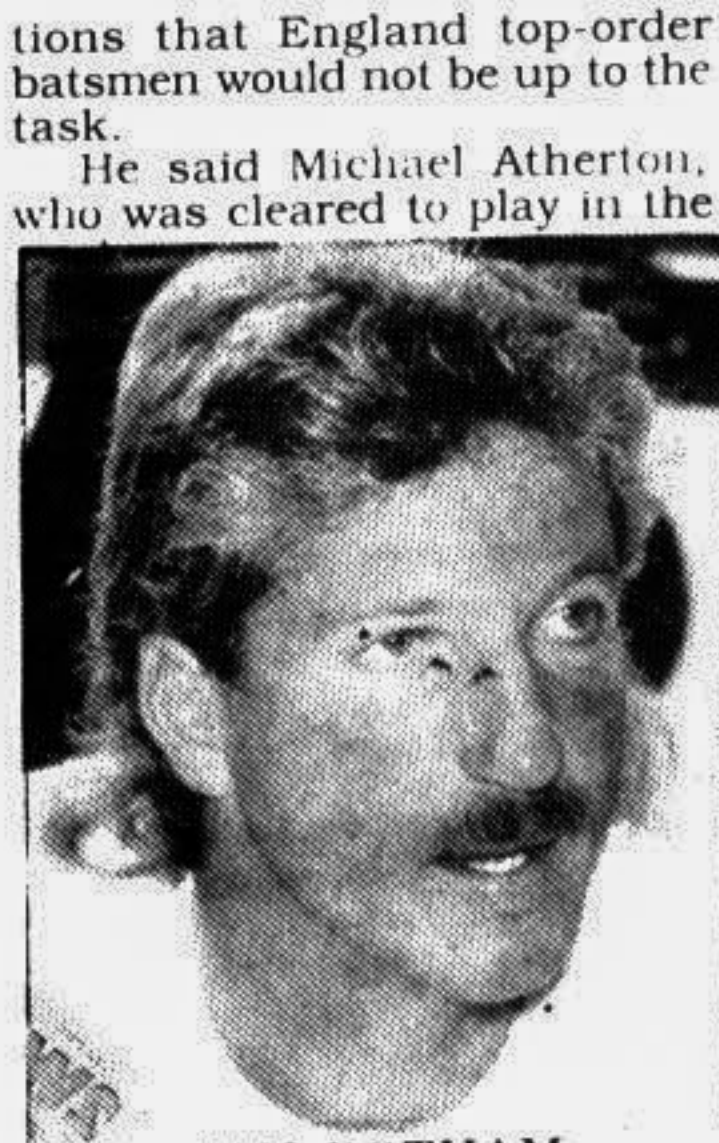
Hosts crush England

NEW DELHI, Nov 18: Hosts India yesterday started their campaign in the Kanishka World Cup cricket for the blind on a healthy note, thrashing England by ten wickets in the opening match at Harbakh stadium here, reports PTI.

Botham warns Aussies



BRISBANE, Nov 18 (Reuters/Internet): Ian Botham, one of England's most successful and dynamic cricketers of recent times, has issued a stern reminder to Australia before the start of the Ashes series -- write off England at your peril.



IAN BOTHAM first Test after passing a fitness test on Wednesday, was a proven performer while fellow

opener Mark Butcher would rise to the occasion. "I'll just take you back to the (1997) series in England when a lot of your so-called experts and ex-players were calling for Mark Taylor's head," said Botham, who is in Australia working as a commentator.

Lehmann remains hopeful

Warne skates on thin ice



MELBOURNE, Nov 18 (AFP/Internet): Shane Warne is to be investigated by the Australian Cricket Board for an outburst against umpires after Victoria's Sheffield Shield defeat by Western Australia.

Warne could face a fine or even suspension if the ACB decides to take action. "We'll see if there is anywhere to go with it, it may be that there is nowhere to go," said Hogan.

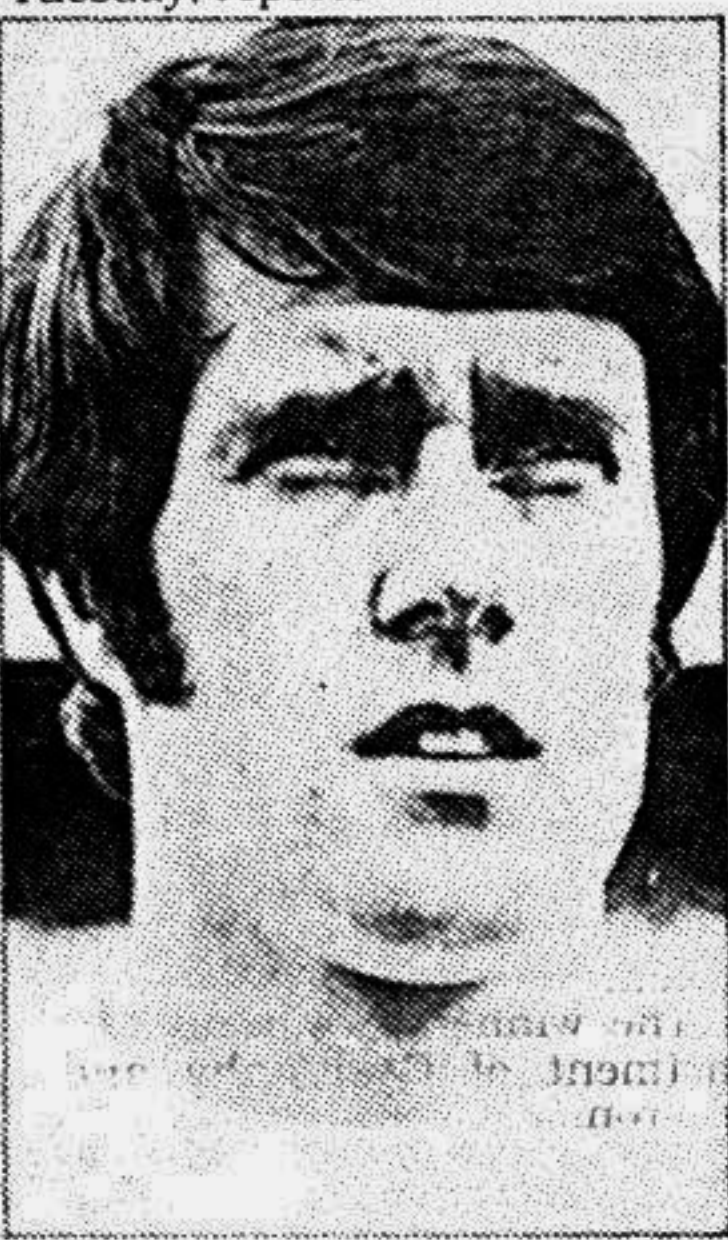
"There's no use worrying about it too much, it's gone now. I've got to get forward with what's going on in my career, whether it's with the state or Australia and play as well as I can."

BRIEF SCORES

England 87 for 9 in 38 overs (Heinrick Swanepaul 25; Balaji Damor 3/19) lost to India 89 for no loss in 17.2 overs (Anand Sharma 57 n.o.).

Sir Geoff!

LONDON, Nov 18: Geoff Hurst, the only player to score a hat-trick in a World Cup final, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday, reports Reuters.



Hurst, now known as Sir Geoff, was part of the England side which won the cup at Wembley in 1966 after beating West Germany 4-2.

ACB's Hair dilemma

SYDNEY, Nov 18: The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) has denied that controversial umpire Darrell Hair will not be allowed to officiate in matches involving Sri Lanka during an international limited-overs tournament next year, reports AP.

Hair outraged Sri Lankan officials during the 1995-96 season when he continually no ball off-spinner Muralitharan for throwing. In an autobiography released this week, Hair calls Muralitharan's action "diabolical," saying he would do the same again.

Following the tour of Australia, International Cricket Council experts assessed the Sri Lankan's action and approved it. He has not been no-balled for throwing since.

Hick reaches down under

BRISBANE, Oct 18 (Reuters/Internet): England batsman Graeme Hick arrived in Australia on Wednesday to help bolster the tourists' chances of winning the Ashes from Australia.

Warne went on: "I'll probably get into trouble for saying that but I don't care because everyone in the whole ground knew he hit it, bar him."

ACB communications manager Michael Hogan confirmed Tuesday the ACB had received a transcript of Warne's post-match media conference and would be having a close look at it.

Ronaldo on unimpressive Inter



MILAN, Nov 18 (AFP/Internet): Ronaldo blamed team coach Gigi Simoni and a poor performance by the players on Tuesday for Inter Milan's wretched start to the Italian league season.

"I've got something to do with it as well. But even us players could and should do better. "If we really want to win the league, we should be frightened of no-one. And we have to prove that in Florence, even though someone like Batistuta can put the frighteners on people."

"We were also helped by the fact that it's a strange championship this season. All the teams are up there together and no one is out of the running. Everyone has something to aim for."

Rangers back out of Koepke deal

GLASGOW, Nov 18 (Reuters/Internet): Rangers have withdrawn from negotiations to sign former German international goalkeeper Andreas Koepke, blaming his agent for being too greedy.

"The game against Fiorentina was an important one for us." Batistuta is already teasing his Brazilian rival with whom he played a memorable exhibition match in Marseille last December before the World Cup draw.

Harbhajan sees a brighter future

MUMBAI, Nov 18: Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who came under International Cricket Council (ICC) scrutiny for suspect bowling action and was subsequently cleared by Fred Titmus of England recently, has said he would not be under any sort of pressure while bowling in future, reports PTI.

"After coming back from England I have found that my line and length has improved and I was able to take seven wickets against Delhi and eight against Services," he added.

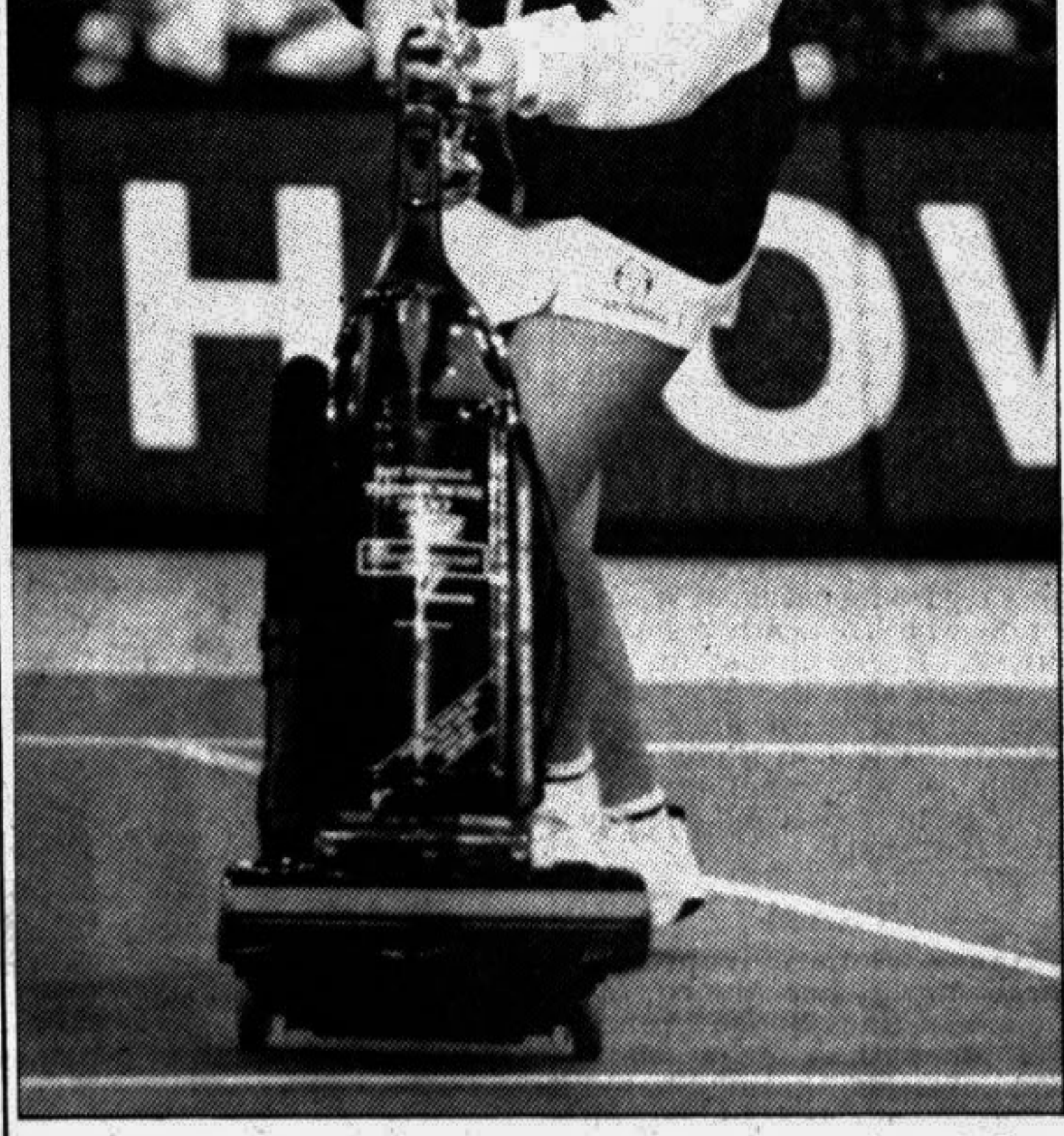
WC soccer US eyes made top seeds

ZURICH, Nov 18: The United States, China, Germany and Norway will be the four seeds for next summer's Women's World Cup, FIFA said Tuesday, reports AP.

Fifteen of the berths in the tournament have been determined, with the field also including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, North Korea, Russia and Sweden.

Iran weighing US invitation

TEHRAN, Nov 18 (Reuters/Internet): Iran's soccer federation is weighing an invitation to play friendly matches in the United States, a federation official said in remarks published on Wednesday.



Martina Hingis of Switzerland fooling around with her new Hoover Vacuum cleaner at New York on November 17 after she was presented with the Clean Sweep award by Hoover company.

Papin hangs up his boots

PARIS, Nov 18 (AFP/Internet): Jean-Pierre Papin, one of the greats of French football, announced his retirement from the game on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old striker, known affectionately in France as "JPP", won 54 caps for France, scoring 30 times. Often he partnered Eric Cantona up front.

Other successes included two Italian league titles with AC Milan and its European Championships Cup win in 1994. He also won the UEFA Cup in 1996 with Bayern Munich although by then injuries were beginning to slow him down.

India enter final

NEW DELHI, Nov 18: India B downed Maldives 2-1 to score their second straight win and enter the final of the Bristol four-nation Independence Cup football tournament with a match to spare, reports PTI.

India top the table with six points from two matches followed by hosts Sri Lanka, who beat Malaysia 2-1 yesterday, with four points.

Tips from 'Beast of Barcelona'

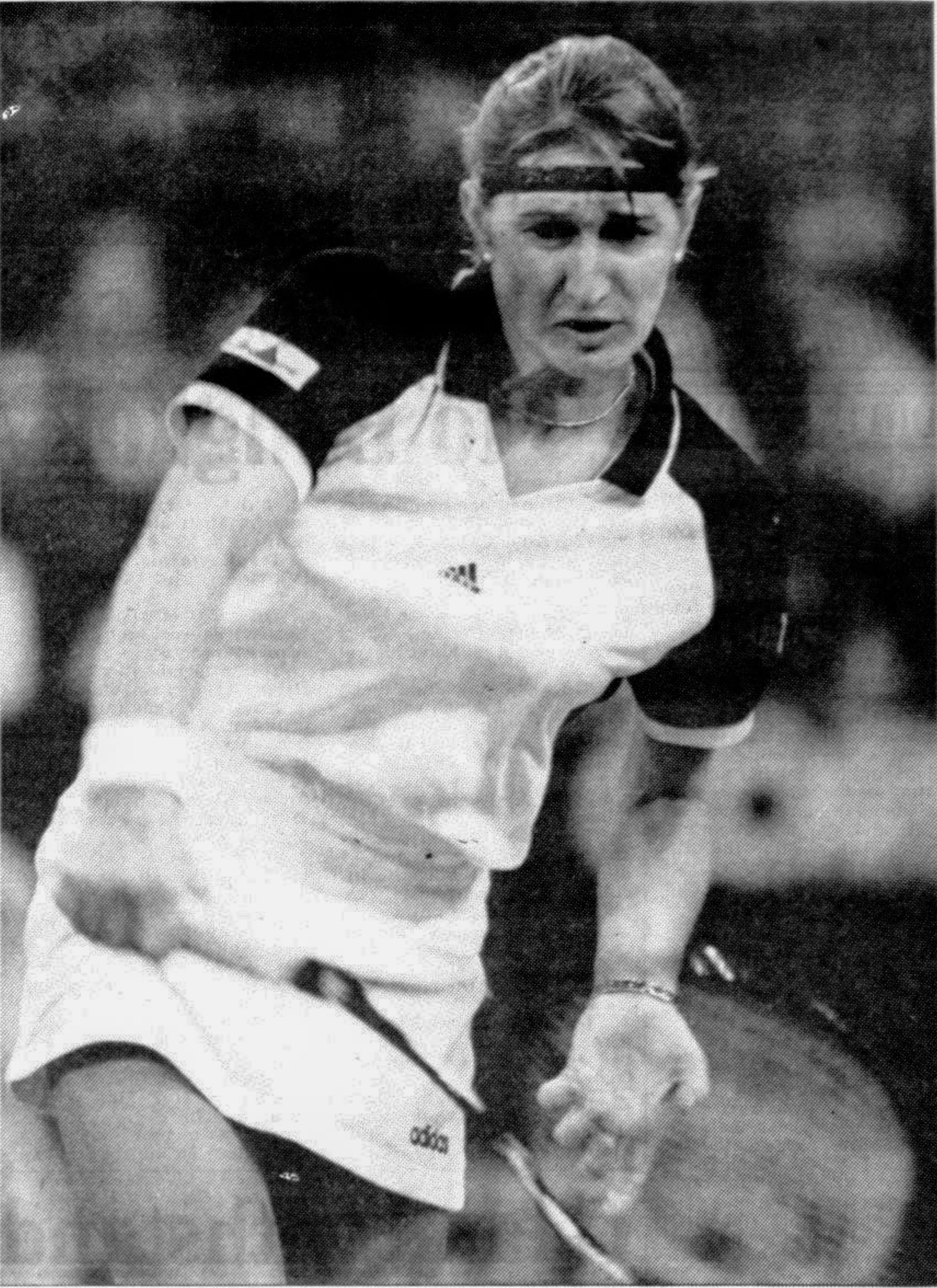
NEWCASTLE, Nov 18 (AFP/Internet): Barcelona defender Miguel Angel Nadal on Tuesday touted himself as the solution to the defensive problems of English Premiership side Newcastle United.

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Iran's 2-1 win over the United States in the World Cup finals in June prompted mass celebrations in the Islamic republic. Direct sports contacts between the two arch-enemies, broken after the 1979 Islamic revolution, resumed in February when U.S. wrestlers attended an international tournament in Tehran.



Steffi Graf executes a backhand return against Jana Novotna at the Chase Championships. —AFP photo

Graf, Hingis reach qtrs



NEW YORK, Nov 18: Steffi Graf continued her remarkable resurging Tuesday night, advancing into the quarterfinals of the Chase Championships with a 6-7, 6-4, 6-1 victory over third-seeded Jana Novotna, reports AP.

Novotna blew a kiss skyward as she walked off the court. Graf didn't delay letting Novotna know she was in a battle. The German broke Novotna to begin the second set. It was the only break of the set, but the only one she needed.

Then came a long and decisive game to being the third set. Graf won the first point with a perfectly placed forehand down the line. Novotna followed with a fault on the next point and immediately walked to umpire Mike Morrissey and requested an injury timeout.

They drill us as if we were in the army," the Chilean world number two told German weekly Stern in an interview released ahead of its publication on Thursday.

After suffering a series of injuries and surgeries, Graf is playing again like the woman who dominated women's tennis for a decade. Since undergoing wrist surgery in September, Graf has won 11 consecutive matches and two tournaments.

The top three players in the world have been among her last four victims. And she has won her last nine matches in the season-ending Championships at Madison Square Garden, having won the title in both 1995 and 1996 before missing last year while recuperating from knee surgery.

Schnyder and Hingis engaged in long baseline barrages. Hingis pulled off the first service break in the fifth game of the opening set when Schnyder made two forehand errors. But the second-seeded Hingis gave the break right back in the next game when she double-faulted on the last two points.

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Novotna became the championships' first defending champion to lose in the first round. But she ran into one of the best players in history in Graf, who because of a lack of matches, wasn't seeded. And Novotna suffered cramps in both calves, taking an injury timeout in the opening game of the final set.

With the Garden crowd solidly behind her, cheering loudly every time she won a point, Graf put her feared forehand on display, spraying winners all around the court.

But Novotna, who captured her first Grand Slam tournament titles this year when she won Wimbledon, was up to the task, matching Graf stroke for stroke, point for point.

She won the first-set tiebreak when her forehand down the line hit the top of the net and bounced over Graf, landing just inside the baseline.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution key for the previous day's puzzle.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a key and a message: "Yesterday's Cryptoquip: COULDN'T REALLY OBSOLETE TEPEES ACCURATELY BE CALLED PAST TENTS? Today's Cryptoquip clue: L equals H. The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error."