

# Simpson stands by rule

**SYDNEY, Jan 24 (AP)** Bob Simpson, the former International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee who reported Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan's bowling action two years ago, said Sunday the rule regarding "throwing" is clear and there is no need to change it.

"The law is absolutely perfect," Simpson said. "We tried to rewrite the law in the 1960s and tried to define what was a throw. What we have to be careful of is not to make it too difficult."

To my mind there is no difference between overstepping the mark, going wide of the crease or throwing. They're all illegal deliveries."

Muralitharan was no-balled in the one-day match at Adelaide Oval on Saturday by Australian umpire Ross Emerson, who also called him three years ago in a one-day in Brisbane.

It was the first time this tour the off-spinner had come up against one of the three officials from the 1995-96 tour.

Darrell Hair stood himself down from Sri Lanka's matches. Tony McQuillan, who also called Muralitharan three years ago, officiated Saturday with Emerson.

Simpson, now Australia's representative on the ICC panel for suspect bowling actions, also says the current review procedure needs reforming.

He has already recommended the nine-man panel meet face to face regularly, rather than simply watch videotapes of a bowler's action and decide its legality by telephone hookup.

Along with Muralitharan,

Simpson also reported the actions of fellow Sri Lankan spinner Kumar Dharmasena and Indian Rajesh Chauhan during the Test series in India in November 1997.

To remain neutral, he was not allowed to sit in judgment on the trio.

Under ICC procedures, the Indian and Sri Lankan boards were asked to undertake remedial action with their players.

Chauhan did so, submitted the relevant tapes, was given the OK and returned to the Indian team after being stood down.

Muralitharan also received a clean bill of health but at no stage did Sri Lanka stand him down.

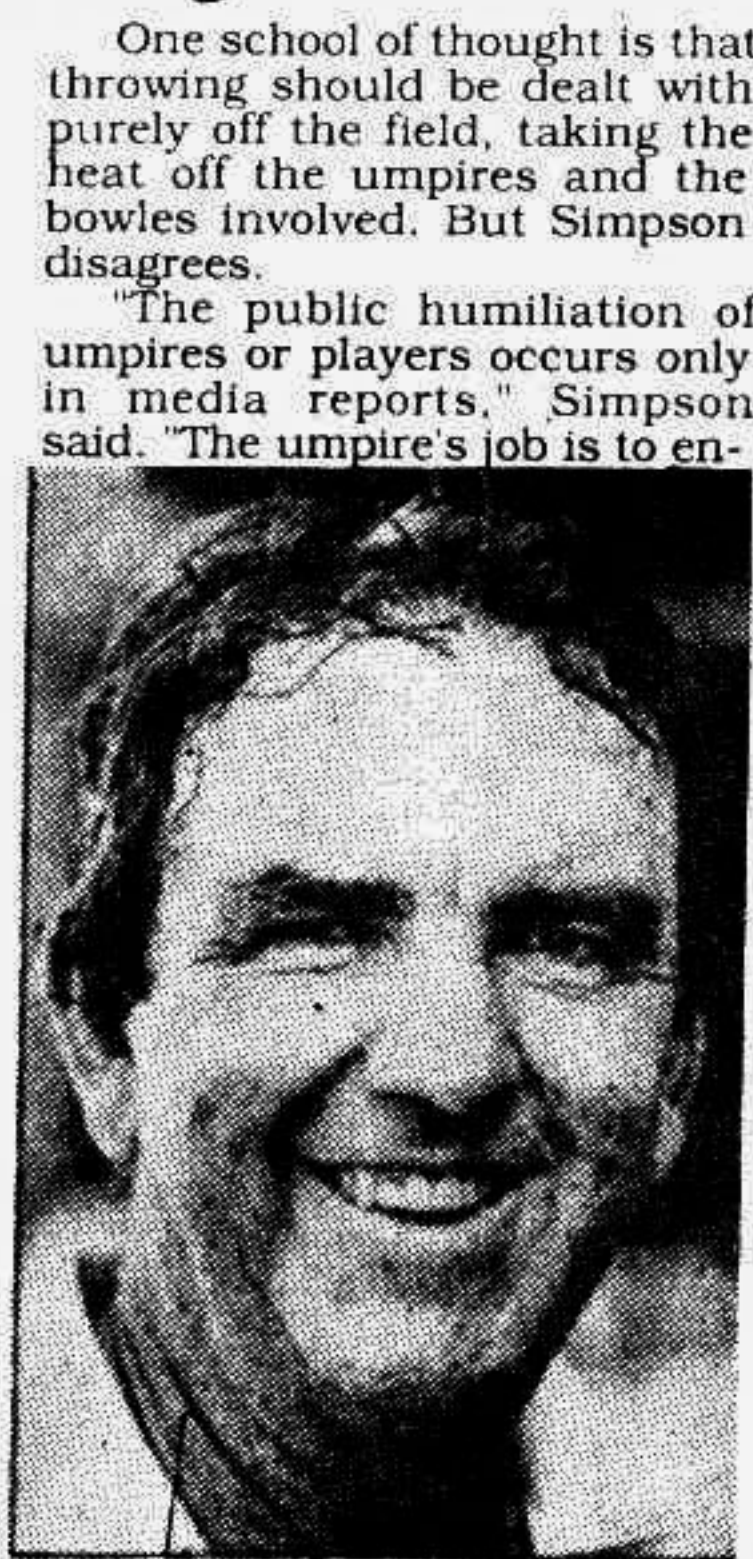
Simpson said he hadn't heard from the panel about Dharmasena, who has played since.

Last week, after media reports that Muralitharan's action had again been reported in Australia, the ICC took the extraordinary step of issuing a statement to impress that a bowler is never cleared.

"It is public knowledge that Muralitharan's action was referred to the panel in late 1997," it read.

"At that time, the panel determined on the video evidence available to them, that his action was fair. Subsequently, it has been reported that Muralitharan has been 'cleared' by the ICC.

The panel can only decide on what has happened, not what may happen. Boards and players understand that an umpire can apply Law 24.2, or the above process can be reactivated, at any time, but without an umpire prejudging the situation."



**BOB SIMPSON**

One school of thought is that throwing should be dealt with purely off the field, taking the heat off the umpires and the bowlers involved. But Simpson disagrees.

The public humiliation of umpires or players occurs only in media reports," Simpson said. "The umpire's job is to enforce the laws of the game."

It's made more difficult by the fact that people want to bring emotion into it. It's a no-ball and doesn't conform to the rules of the game."

Muralitharan's rubbery wrist and elbow deformity make for one of the strangest bowling actions, and one of the most hotly debated.

Sri Lanka has never accepted the notion that it may be illegal, that his arm straightens upon delivering the ball, while some umpires are convinced he should be banned.

# Betis hold on for dour draw

**BILBAO, Spain, Jan 24 (Reuters/Internet)** A tight defensive display by Real Betis saw them hold on for a goalless draw in a drab Spanish first division clash with Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

Javier Clemente's side, who were missing discarded Brazilian Denilson and former Ajax winger Finidi George, made their defensive intentions clear from the start, packing the midfield and rarely looking to venture forward.

And their safety-first policy saw them clinch the point they came for as in-form Athletic found no way through.

The closest either side came to breaking the deadlock was on 20 minutes, when a bout of nerves from Betis keeper Joaquin Valero, preferred to regular number one Toni Prats, almost gifted the home side the lead.

Valero, attempting to beat away a cross drifting in from the left, succeeded only in deflecting the ball onto the crossbar.

Julen Guerrero reacted first to the loose ball but Valero managed to recover in time to block his goal-bound header.

Valero was forced to make way for Prats five minutes later after picking up a thigh strain and thereafter the Betis defence looked a lot more secure.

As Athletic tired, Betis had marginally the better of the second half, with Oli Perez twice going close with snap shots.

But the game always seemed to be heading for a draw and a 35,000 crowd whistled both sides off the field at the end.

# Fulham send Aston Villa crashing

**LONDON, Jan 24:** Kevin Keegan's Fulham slayed their second Premiership giant in succession when they shocked Aston Villa 2-0 in the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday, but it was the bizarre behaviour of Villa striker Stan Collymore, which overshadowed events in Birmingham, reports AFP.

The temperamental striker apparently stormed away from Villa Park before kick-off after learning he was only on the substitutes' bench for the match.

Villa manager John Gregory refused to comment when asked if he felt let down by the action of Collymore, who had complained about his role as only a bit-part player in midweek.

"I don't want to comment on that situation at the moment," said Gregory. "We're desperately trying to find out what's the matter with him but he's not injured."

Collymore's day at Villa now look numbered, with a possible swap deal involving Atletico Madrid's Juninho on the cards.

Without him on Saturday Villa were thoroughly embarrassed by Second Division leaders Fulham, who scored first half goals through Simon Morgan, a self-confessed fan of Villa's bitter city rivals Birmingham, and a deflected free-kick by the outstanding Steve Hayward.

This takes us on to the next stage and it tells us all, not least out fans, that we're going places," said Keegan, whose side beat Southampton in the previous round.

John Collins' Swansea, inspired by their waddling mascot 'Cyril the Swan', bravely held out for 81 minutes against Premiership side Derby before Kevin Harper headed the only goal of the match to end the Welsh side's cup dream.

A spectacular overhead effort by Robbie Earle gave Wimbledon the lead at home to Tottenham after 61 minutes but



Action from the FA Cup clash between Tottenham Hotspur and Wimbledon. — AP/UNB photo

# Understanding 'The Wall'

**NEW DELHI, Jan 24:** Indian cricket needs at least one Mohinder Amarnath every decade for a variety of reasons.

One, to personify a man's devotion to the game that guarantees resilience. Amarnath played his first Test against Australia in 1969-70 and scored a one-day hundred against the West Indies in 1988 nearly 19 years later. Another, to face fast bowlers abroad. In Rahul Sharad Dravid, it would not be wrong to say we have found an Amarnath for the new millennium. This can be judged by his performance in the just concluded New Zealand tour, despite the treatment meted out to him by the selectors over the last four years.

A player who has a better average when playing away, especially when most other Indian batsmen are flat-track bullies at home who turn into jelly on bristling wickets abroad. A player who has the stodge determination to fluster and irritate the quicks, being prepared to take body blows, a player who has not only the Indian fans but others as well. Dravid is all this, and much more.

Nicknamed 'The Wall', he is most dependable in the face of adversity, has shown in his brief career a brilliant ability to counter-attack fast bowlers when his confidence-level is high and is the only player apart from Sachin Tendulkar who has better batting averages abroad than at home.

What makes Dravid special is not merely his technique but the will to succeed at the international level, much like a youthful Kapil Dev, and his appetite for runs is reminiscent of Mohammad Azharuddin in his younger days. His technique has drawn accolades from commentators like Geoffrey Boycott, Sunil Gavaskar and Richard Hadlee. Stylish and purposeful in every move, he has as elegant a stance as Kim Hughes. He prefers to play

straight, has a high backlift and plays the pull shot with a lot of flourish. The fact that he carefully nurtured and built his game around a sound technique when players have managed without it in the domestic circuit speaks volumes about his sense of inner discipline which has borne fruit in Test cricket.

Added to this is the charismatic glint in his eye that conveys the intensity of his focus on the game. That intensity, when performing well, does not come across as a sour, self-conscious inward-looking preoccupation, in the manner of Sanjay Manjrekar that indicated a dread of failure, but rather a confident awareness that one is capable of greater things.

And his boyish good looks have made him a pin-up idol in the Ravi Shastri mood and landed him with huge endorsement contracts ranging from shoes to marigolds. Incidentally, he wears a T-shirt that reads: 'Cricket is life. The rest is mere detail.'

"In what is probably his last comeback after being dropped, Dravid has displayed an amazing run of consistency in the ongoing New Zealand tour. He gave India a glimmer of a chance for victory in the Hamilton Test by scoring a mammoth 190 and followed it up with a 103 not out in the second innings of the same Test. He made it three centuries in a row by scoring a breezy 123 not out (off 123 balls) in the first one-day international and followed that up with two more brisk 50s. Dravid's performance should silence the selectors, who confidently maintained throughout last year that he was slow to adapt to the one-day game.

How the selectors mustered the nerve to drop a player of his calibre is hard to understand considering that Dravid always fulfilled the criterion for selection in India — consistency. In 1997-98, Dravid scored 1,207 Test runs at an average of 57.47 with 12 fifties and one century. His only weakness at the time was his inability to convert his 50s into 100s. He was dismissed four times in the 90s and twice between 80 and 100 in the period 1996-98 and yet found himself being dropped for the major one-day international tournaments in 1998 allegedly for slow scoring.

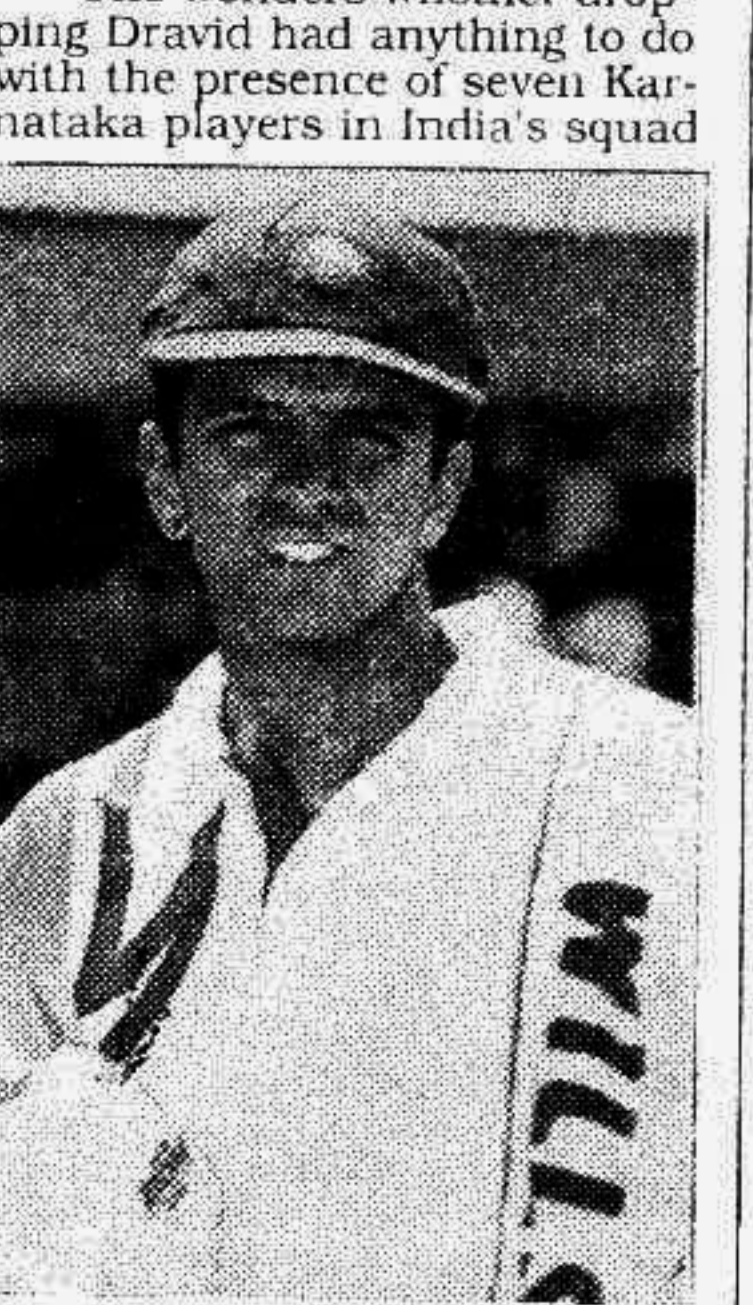
What puzzles the cricket enthusiast is how the selectors miss identifying the long-term worth of a player like Dravid. Yes, he found it difficult to rotate the strike — the ability to play with soft hands — which is crucial in one-day cricket.

Ironically, Dravid missed out on Test centuries on many occasions by attempting flamboyant strokes while the selec-

tors insist that he cannot play big shots. They would have known better if they bothered to heed his reputation for big-hitting in Bangalore. Of course, being the blaster in provincial cricket is no indication that a player can manage it at the international level. But, for a player with his kind of technique, strokeplay is bound to spring from growing confidence.

There is no reason to believe that a player who collared Alan Donald and Lance Klusener in an innings of 148 in a Test match cannot learn to do the same in the one-day game. In any case, his strike rate in one-day cricket is 66 runs per 100 balls faced at an average of 34.5 per innings which is quite remarkable for a batsman batting at one drop.

One wonders whether dropping Dravid had anything to do with the presence of seven Karnataka players in India's squad



**RAHUL DRAVID**

of 14 between 1996 and '98. Given the zonal pressures on the selection policies, the presence of Karnataka players like Anil Kumble.

Javagal Srinath, Venkatesh Prasad, Sunil Joshi, Dodda Ganesh and David Johnson at various times in the Indian team may have simulated pressure to ease Dravid out on some pretext.

On a less conspiratorial note, Dravid may have faced the axe for the selector's impatience to catch up with the revolution in the one-day game orchestrated by Sri Lanka's Sanath Jayasuriya, who has forced other teams to adopt the strategy of hitting over the infield in the first 15 overs.

Dravid is crucial to India's World Cup plans since he stems the damage to the innings, should Tendulkar or Saurav Ganguly be dismissed early.

— India Abroad News Service

# Super Eagles stay atop

**CAIRO, Jan 24:** Goals by Garba Lawal and Finidi George gave Nigeria a 2-0 victory over Burundi on Saturday and moved the 1996 champions atop Group 5 in African Cup qualifying, reports AP.

The 1994 champions, who withdrew the week before the 1996 tournament and were banned from the 1998 finals because of it, improved to 1-1-0 and four points, one ahead of Burundi.

The match was one of four Saturday, part of a slate of 13 scheduled for the weekend in African Cup qualifying play.

In other matches Saturday, Eritrea and Cameroon played to a 0-0 draw in Group 1. Mauritians drew 1-1 with 1996 champions and 1998 runners-up South Africa, and Senegal and Burkina Faso drew 1-1 in Group 5.

The Sierra Leone-Togo match has been postponed indefinitely due to the civil war in the West African nation.

The rest of the matches were scheduled for Sunday: Ghana vs. Mozambique, Guinea vs. Morocco, Republic of Congo vs. Mali, Ivory Coast vs. Namibia, Angola vs. Gabon, Congo vs. Kenya, Madagascar vs. Zambia, Liberia vs. Uganda and Algeria vs. Tunisia.

In Abokuta, Nigeria, the Super Eagles 2-0 victory marked the debut Thijs Libregt as Nigeria manager. They have a month before going to Senegal for their third round match.

At Curepipe, Mauritius, Desire Periatembee's tally in the 55th minute earned Mauritius the 1-1 draw and their first points in qualifying for the 2000 finals.

South Africa's Philemon Masinga put Bafana Bafana ahead in the 45th minute and the draw put them atop Group 4. However, Gabon could move back ahead on Sunday with a draw or victory over Angola.

At Dakar, Senegal, Alain Nana came up with a series of stunning saves to preserve Burkina Faso's draw with Senegal.

Nana blocked a flurry of Senegalese shots in the closing minutes after Burkina Faso midfielder Brahima Korbeogo scored the equalizer in the 54th minute.

Senegal dominated the first half, earning several opportunities before attacker Falif Keita struck in the 29th minute. After the break, however, Burkina Faso's young attackers rallied before lapsing in the final minutes.

The Senegalese side was very athletic and pushed us to the limits and it was a difficult game, but we were able to pull off a goal and an acceptable result," Burkina Faso striker Seydou Traore said.

# 9-man Monaco beaten on penalties

**PARIS, Jan 24(Reuters/Internet):** Five times winners Monaco had two players sent off and went out of the French Cup first round 5-4 on penalties to second division strugglers Amiens on Saturday.

Monaco were the sixth top flight side eliminated, although 1996 winners AJ Auxerre went out 2-0 in an all-first division clash at record 10 times winners Olympique Marseille.

Toulouse bowed to fifth division amateurs Jura Sud Foot from the Alpine region 8-7 on penalties following a 1-1 draw after extra time.

Amiens goalkeeper Julien Lachuer saved from debutant Oli Courville, a junior playing because of a Monaco sickbay full of defenders, after the teams had finished 1-1 after extra time.

Striker Xavier Chaher put Amiens, 17th in division two, in front in the sixth minute and former French international midfielder Sabri Lamouchi equalised with a 25-metre drive 10 minutes later.

In the 26th minute, Monaco midfielder Sylvain Legwinski fouled Chaher in the box and was sent off following an earlier yellow card.

Monaco's reserve goalkeeper Jean-Marie Aubry, standing in for the injured Fabien Barthez, saved the penalty taken by David Francois.

Lamouchi was dismissed in the 59th minute for a second bookable offence.

Florian Maurice opened Marseille's scoring with a penalty in the 26th minute following a push on Christophe Dugarry and Fabrizio Ravanelli headed the second in the 39th.

Jura Sud's hero was goalkeeper Roland Nicod, who converted his team's 11th spot kick in a marathon shootout and then saved Toulouse's, taken by his opposite number Philippe Schuth.

# Bolivia, USA friendly today

**SANTA CRUZ, Bolivia, Jan 24 (AP)** When Bolivia and the United States face off on Sunday in a international friendly, it won't be a major clash of cultures.

Starting Bolivian midfielders Marco Etcheverry and Mauricio Ramos and forward Jaime Moreno all play in American Major League Soccer, Etcheverry and Moreno for DC United and Ramos for Tampa Bay.

And US coach Bruce Arena was Etcheverry's and Moreno's manager for the last three years at DC United.

Bolivia will be bringing a full squad for the debut of manager Hector "Bambino" Veira of Argentina, while Arena is still in the process of rebuilding the American squad following the debate at the World Cup under former coach Steve Sampson.

Arena will have a mostly young squad and be without English-based goalkeepers Kasey Keller and Brad Friedel and several other member of the France '98 squad.

Expected to get his first cap since the 1994 World Cup will be goalkeeper Tony Meola, who retired after the World Championship in the United States only to return in 1996 with the New York-New Jersey MetroStars.

He has been arguably the best keeper in MLS in its three-year history and with Chicago Fire keeper Zach Thornton, Meola's backup for two years at the MetroStars and the starter in the United States' previous match against Australia, injured, Meola is likely to get the nod.

his brilliance was matched by Frenchman David Ginola 11 minutes later.

The Tottenham winger, accused of diving by Wimbledon after the league match between the two sides last week, turned the Wimbledon defence inside out before crashing a 25-metre effort into the net to earn Spurs a 1-1 draw.

Chris Armstrong wasted several good chances for Tottenham, who must now play Wimbledon for a sixth time this season. The two sides also meet in two-legged League Cup semi-final starting this Wednesday.

Noel Whelan chipped Coventry into the lead at Premiership rivals Leicester after 16 minutes the visitors had Dutchman George Boateng sent off just before the interval. Shortly afterwards Emile Heskey won Leicester a penalty but Matt Elliott botched his spot-kick.

Goals on the counter attack from Paul Teller and Steve

Froggatt sealed Coventry's 3-0 victory late on.

Portsmouth who beat Premiership outfit Nottingham Forest in the last round shocked Premiership high-riders Leeds at Fratton Park by taking a 10th minute lead through Luke Nightingale.

But Leeds were level 60 seconds later through central defender David Wetherall and went in front after 17 minutes when Irishman Ian Harte netted.

Australian Harry Kewell made it 3-1 five minutes after half-time and late strikes by Bruno Ribeiro and Clyde Wijnhard completed a 5-1 rout.

Blackburn's goalkeeper John Filan was stretched off with his neck a brace after a collision with First Division Sunderland's Niall Quinn in the first half at Ewood Park.

Blackburn suffered a further blow when defender Jeff Kenna was red-carded midway through the second half but scored the

winner four minutes later through with a fine effort from Keith Gillespie.

First Division Bradford started brightly against Newcastle at St James' Park but were eventually outclassed 3-0. German Dietmar Hamann, England captain Alan Shearer and Georgian Temuri Ketsbaia scoring the goals.

Nick Barnby scored a rare goal for Everton at Goodison Park to give them a 39th minute lead against First Division Ipswich. The home side has Italian defender Marco Materazzi sent off for two yellow cards in the second half but held out.

Italian Benito Carbone's 35 metre dipper was the highlight of Sheffield Wednesday's 2-0 home win over Stockport.

United recovered from 3-1 down to force extra time at Division Two side Notts County before Brazilian Marcelo scored his second of the match to give the visitors a 4-3 win.

# Isaac stops Levi

**HALEAH, Florida, Jan 24:** Fifty-eight year-old heavyweight Levi Forte lost a four-round decision to Isaac Poole — a journeyman 20 years his junior, reports AP.

Forte, who has not fought since 1978, just didn't throw enough punches to convince the judges in the four-round bout Friday night at Milander Auditorium.

In fact, Poole, wasn't that active either, with the bout featuring several moments of both fighters standing in the middle of the ring, posing and not throwing any punches.

Referee Bill Connors repeatedly warned Forte and Poole to pick up the pace or risk point deductions.

Eventually Poole (2-14) scored a few left jabs and left hooks to win on two judges' scorecards 40-36 and 39-37. The third scored the bout 39-39.

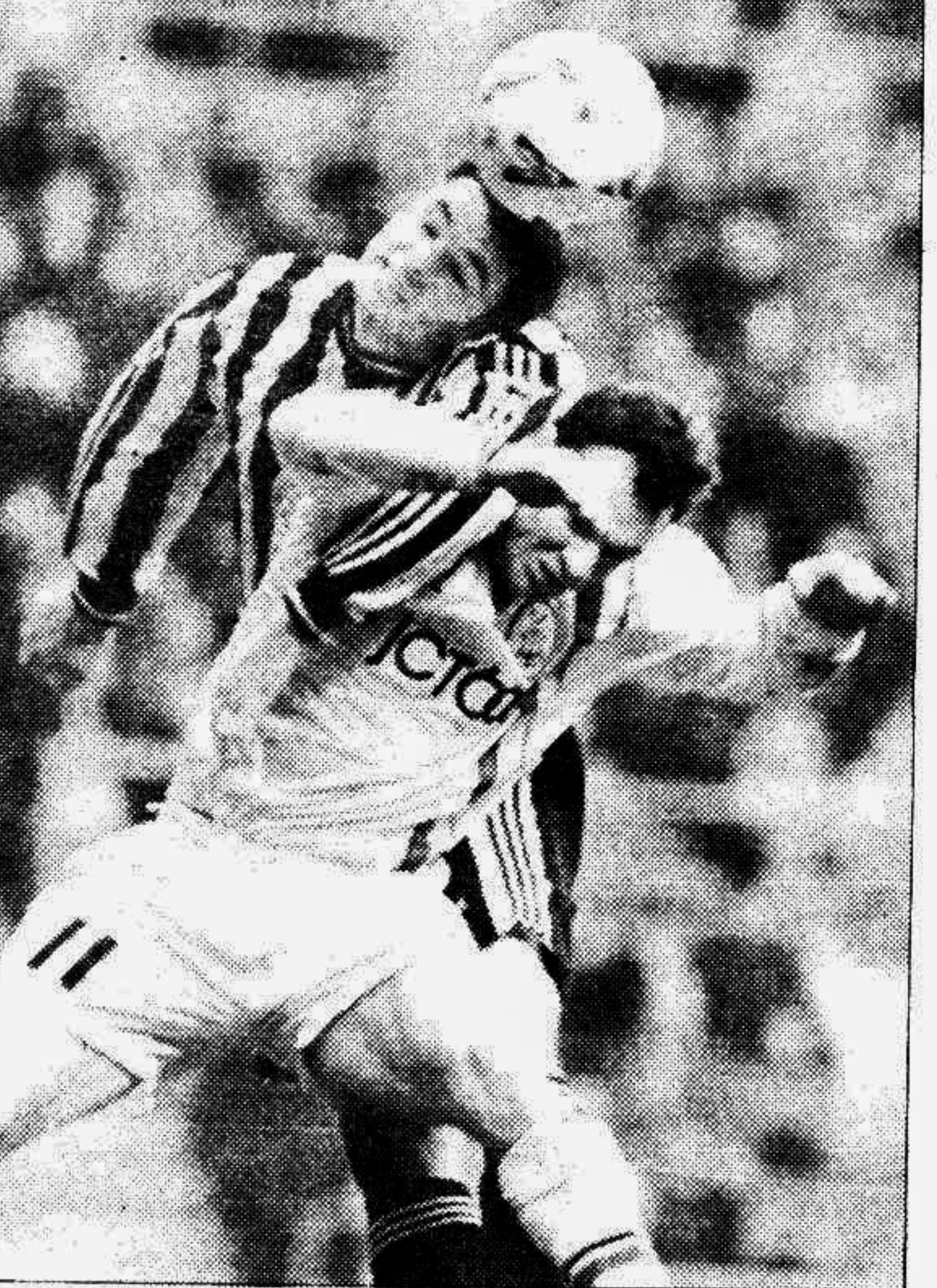
Despite the loss, Forte (25-33-20) believes his performance earned him a chance to fight again.

"I didn't get knocked out and I wasn't hurt," said Forte, whose first professional bout was in 1961. "It's just a matter of picking up my pace. I didn't have it tonight."

Forte landed an occasional left jab and combination to the body in the second round.

"You've got to remember that I haven't fought in 20 years," he said. "For someone my age to go four rounds should give me a chance to fight again."

According to Mike Scionti, executive director of the Florida Athletic Commission, Forte's license to fight was approved in a November meeting.



An aerial tussle during the FA Cup encounter between Newcastle United and Bradford City. — AP/UNB photo

# Question mark over Stan's Villa future

**BIRMINGHAM, England, Jan 24(Reuters/Internet):** A major question mark is hanging over Stan Collymore's future with Aston Villa after his mystery absence from the shock F.A. Cup 2-0 home defeat against second division Fulham.

Villa manager John Gregory was expected to have talks with the controversial striker on Sunday and has indicated he will make a statement on Monday.

There were reports after Saturday's fourth round tie at Villa Park that Collymore had stormed off home after learning he had not been included in Villa's starting line-up, despite the absence through injury of Dion Dublin.

England striker Paul Merson was recalled instead, with Gregory confirming that Collymore would have been one of the substitutes.

"Stan would have been in the squad of 16. But due to unforeseen circumstances it was decided on the morning of the game that we should let him stay away," said Gregory.

A lot of players go off in a huff if they are not in the starting line-up, but some cope with it better than others."

But Collymore's agent, Paul Stretford, denied the former Nottingham Forest and Liverpool striker had gone absent. He said the player had informed a member of Villa's medical staff that he was not well enough to play.

Gregory has already signalled that Collymore will not be considered for Villa's next game at Newcastle on Saturday.

"I will tell people more tomorrow," he said. "But do I expect Stan to play next week? No."



Martina Hingis poses at Melbourne's Botanical Gardens yesterday. — AFP photo

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

1 Lone male  
5 Harbor  
8 Washer  
12 Musical  
13 Born in the  
14 Emanation  
15 Musical  
17 Picture of health?  
18 Pearl, for one  
19 Disencomber  
20 Musical  
21 "With it"  
22 Young fox  
23 Eskimo  
26 Musical  
30 Lab  
31 assistant?  
32 Peruke  
33 Bread  
34 spread  
35 Musical  
36 Scissors  
37 "Golly!"

**DOWN**

2 Kid  
3 Calla lily  
4 Toothpaste  
5 Dutch  
6 Second-hand  
7 Petrol  
8 Musical  
9 Contented  
10 OPEC  
11 Unfavorable votes  
16 Actor  
17 Shell-less  
20 Shack  
21 Musical  
22 Glutton  
23 Tool set  
24 Cabinet  
25 Addressee  
26 Teen-ager's woe  
27 Ivy  
28 Agent  
29 "Mayday!"  
31 Symbol of intrigue  
34 Expert  
35 Burn a bit  
37 Annoy  
38 Jack of early TV  
39 Madonna's "La... Bonita"

**Solution time: 27 mins.**

**LAST Monday's answer**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

40 "o'clock scholar"  
41 Word with jay or law  
42 Nabokov novel  
43 Weight  
44 Residents' suffix  
46 Milk source  
47 "picture paints 1,000 words..."

**Today's Cryptquip clue: U equals G**

The Cryptquip 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.