

Agent thinks Petit won't leave

LONDON, Mar 20: French player Emmanuel Petit's agent dismissed reports Friday that Petit threatened to quit English football, reports Xinhua.

The Arsenal midfielder had announced he was fed-up with English referees after receiving his fourth red card Saturday.

But Petit's agent, Jeroma Anderson, has cast doubt over the move-saying: "Any great player do have a situation when they blow hot and cold-like Eric Cantona."

"The fact is that Petit has had problems with certain aspects of the English game, but he has also had some fantastic times."

"It has crossed his mind to look to pastures new... but at this moment in time it is absolute nonsense to say he is going to quit this and quit that. It is just not true," he said.

Speaking in the Mirror newspaper, Petit had earlier said: "I'm totally fed-up with what has been happening. I've just had enough and I won't change my mind."

"If I'm going to be shown the yellow card every time I open my mouth or make a mistake on the pitch — while others are getting away with much more — I'm wasting my time here."

"These people are supposed to be out there on the pitch to protect skillful players from bad tackles, not to punish those players every time they put a foot wrong."

"Some of the Arsenal team have been trying to talk me around at training this week and I appreciate their concern," he added.

Ali's agent sues Columbia Pics

ROANOKE, Virginia, Mar. 20: The longtime manager and an associate of former heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali have filed a lawsuit seeking to block Columbia Pictures from making a movie about the American boxer's life and seeking 50 million dollars in damages, reports Reuters.

Ali's former manager, Jabir Herbert Muhammad, and Jason Marcus Hirschfield, the son of Ali's former attorney, said they control the rights to the three-time heavyweight champion's life story through Muhammad Ali Productions, a production partnership with Ali.

"The sole purpose of this corporation was to own, develop and commercialise any authorised biographical or autobiographical story of the life and times of Ali," said the lawsuit, filed in Roanoke.

The lawsuit, filed on March 11, alleges that Ali sold the rights to his life story to Columbia Pictures without consulting his partners in the production company after learning they were in talks with another potential film producer.

The lawsuit was filed against Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc., parent company of Columbia Pictures, which is preparing to shoot a film on Ali's life starring actor and rapper Will Smith in the lead role.

Ali's wife, Lonnie, in a statement issued by Sony, said the lawsuit was a "calculated attack on Muhammad personally." The 57-year-old Ali, once known to "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," has been slowed by parkinson's disease.

Born Cassius Clay, the fab boxer knocked out Sonny Liston to become world heavyweight boxing champion for the first time in February 1964. The day after the fight, he announced his conversion to Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

Ali later refused to be drafted into military service during the Vietnam War, and had his boxing licence suspended. He regained the heavyweight crown by dropping George Foreman in the eighth round of a 1973 fight, lost the title to Leon Spinks in 1978, and regained it in a rematch six months later.

Chung's Pyongyang trip postponed again

SEOUL, Mar. 20: For the second time this year, South Korea's top soccer administrator has been forced to postpone a scheduled visit to North Korea, reports AP.

Chung Mong-joon, president of (South) Korea Football Association, had been scheduled to begin a six-day visit to North Korea on Friday to discuss sports exchanges and the possibility of holding some of the 2002 World Cup games in the communist nation.

But soccer officials of both sides, who met in Beijing Wednesday and early Thursday, failed to agree on the itinerary and other details of Chung's visit, association officials said.

They declined to say why and how long the visit will be delayed.

Chung initially had planned to visit North Korea in mid-January but was forced to call off the trip a few days before he was to have departed Seoul.

As a co-host of the 2002 World Cup with Japan, South Korea has the right to stage 32 matches.

Chung has expressed hope that two or three of the matches assigned to South Korea will be staged in North Korea. The North has not officially responded to the suggestion.

Attempts to promote sports exchanges between the two Koreas are always vulnerable to political tension. The two Koreas are still technically at war, since the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Cottee relishing Wembley battle

LEICESTER, England, Mar 20(Reuters/Internet): Two years after taking "early retirement" Tony Cottee returns to Wembley Stadium on Sunday for a fourth and probably final crack at winning the first major honour of his 16-year career.

And the fact that Leicester City's opponents in the League Cup Final are Tottenham Hotspur, Cottee's long-time favourite opposition, bodes well for City's aspirations of a second League Cup triumph in three years.

"At this stage of my career the prospect of finally being a Wembley winner means everything to me," said the 33-year-old former West Ham and Everton striker.

As a 17-year-old, Cottee celebrated his West Ham debut by scoring against Spurs. His 100th league goal was also against Spurs and soon after kick-starting his league career with Leicester last season, on his return from being "pensioned off" to Malaysia, he was on target again in a 1-1 draw at White Hart Lane.

"I'm reluctant to say Spurs are a lucky club for me because football has a habit of making you eat your words," said Cottee.

"But my record against them has always been pretty good, as has my career in the League Cup."

In his first game in the com-

petition he scored four goals for West Ham in a 10-0 win over Bury. And he's been Leicester's success-story in this season's competition, with five goals in four games, including all three in the two-leg semi-final against Sunderland.

"It really would mean an awful lot to me to help Leicester win the Cup again because I've got to look at this as my last chance to win that elusive winners' medal," he said.

Cottee played in three Wembley finals for Everton and lost them all -- and that has made his team mates even more determined to help him collect a winner's medal on Sunday.

Northern Ireland midfielder Neil Lennon said: "All players want to win a medal, but for Tony to have such a glorious career and come away with nothing would be a travesty."

"The guy's a fantastic professional, his attitude is spot-on, and he's a natural goalscorer."

You're born with the talent he's got. And he's such a nice guy to have around the club, on and off the field.

"If we do win it, it would be his final and trophy because he's done so much to get us there."

But Cottee admits it's becoming an increasing struggle to maintain his fitness level.

He was "rested" for Leicester's 1-1 draw with Charlton last weekend and missed training on Thursday because he was still feeling "a bit stiff."

"We know we're in for a tough time at Wembley. George Graham has done a great job turning Tottenham around. But on our day we're capable of beating anyone."

Midfielder Muzzy Izzet, who scored a contender for goal of the season against Spurs when Leicester beat the Londoners 2-1 in October, believes being underdogs on Sunday will suit the 1997 winners.

"If there's any secret to our success under Martin O'Neill it probably has something to do with the fact that we gel so well as a team," said Izzet.

"We haven't got the millions of pounds other clubs can spend on signing top players. But we've got a terrific spirit, and will to win, in the dressing room."

"George Graham has injected a lot of his old Arsenal-thinking into Tottenham, who have a much more solid look about them now."

"But if Emile Heskey can play well against Sol Campbell it could give us the edge."

For City's Jamaican defender Frank Sinclair it's the chance of a second successive winners' medal after scoring for Chelsea in their 2-0 League Cup triumph over Middlesbrough last season.

"When I was at Chelsea we used to beat Spurs all the time. But this is a different Tottenham team under George Graham," said Sinclair. "They'll be up for it as much as we are."

GFA hails co-hosting idea

ACCRA, Mar 20: The Ghana Football Association (GFA) said a ruling that Nigeria and Ghana should co-host next year's African Nations' Cup finals had the advantage of reducing the financial burden for host countries, reports Reuters.

"It is a laudable novelty idea which has created a precedent for the continent's elite tournament," GFA chairman Alhaji Jawula said on Friday.

Earlier, an unnamed Nigerian government official, quoted by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) called the co-hosting decision by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) "an insult to Nigeria."

He said his country's facilities for the World Youth Cup it is hosting from April 3-24 at eight venues should give it "an edge over Ghana or any other country."

However, Jawula said the move would allow CAF to test the concept of co-hosting and had the advantage of reducing the financial burden for host countries.

CAF had announced on Monday that Ghana and Nigeria would share the 16-nation biennial event, it said its decision was based on the fact that both Ghana and Nigeria last hosted the competition almost 20 years ago.

CAF stripped Zimbabwe of the right to host the tournament last month, saying its facilities were not up to scratch.

It said no country could carry the financial burden of hosting the cup alone at such short notice.

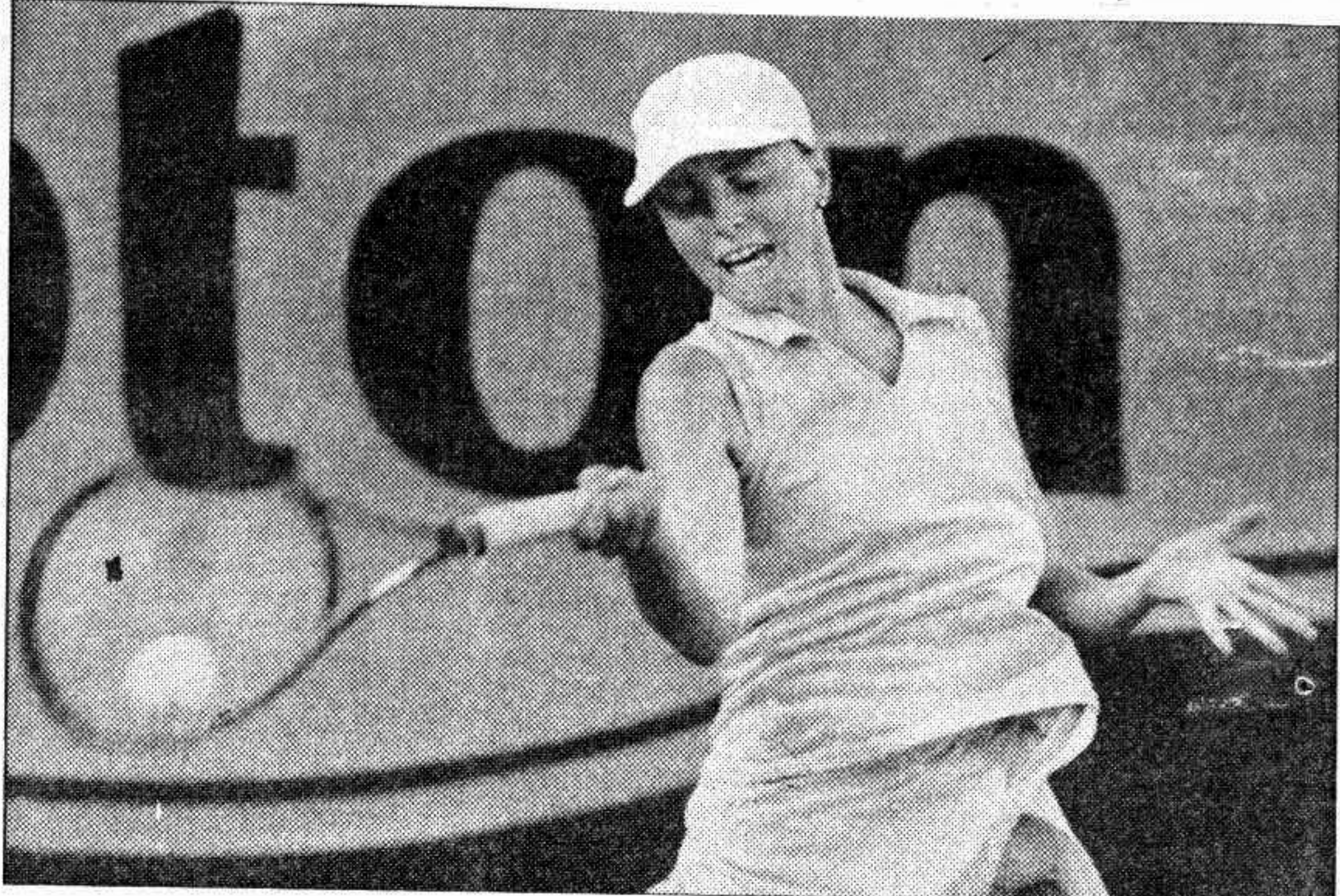
Ghana's leading bi-weekly sport magazine "Graphic Sports" also favoured one country hosting the event in its latest edition the paper called CAF's ruling "nebulous."

But Jawula said he had expected CAF to opt for co-hosting.

"If CAF in its wisdom says it has taken three years and Zimbabwe is still not ready and they (CAF) want to make things lighter for us by this method I think we have nothing to worry about," Jawula said.

As hosts, Ghana and Nigeria will qualify automatically for the finals. Egypt, the defending champions, also has a guaranteed place in the finals.

Ghana will host the CAF congress, which precedes the tournament, and the opening ceremony. Nigeria will host the final, each country will host two groups.



Frenchwoman Marlene Weingartner makes a forehand return against compatriot Sandrine Testud at the Lipton Championships in Florida on March 19. — AFP photo

Graf too good for Capriati

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida, Mar 20 (AP): At her best, Steffi Graf is still tough to beat.

Two comebacks collided Friday, and Graf showed no mercy with a 6-0, 6-1 victory over Jennifer Capriati in the second round at the Lipton Championships.

"That's the best she's ever played against me," Capriati said. "She would beat anybody today, the way she played."

The 29-year-old Graf, slowed by injuries for much of the past two years, is seeking her first tournament title since November. Based on Friday's performance, she's a threat to upstage such youngsters as Martina Hingis and the Williams sisters.

Moving swiftly like one of those teenagers, Graf won in just 47 minutes. She lost only nine points in the first set.

"I'm at my best if I play like that," said the five-time Lipton champion, who is thankful that good health has allowed her to play 21 matches already this year.

"I appreciate that a lot. It feels great after having a few years of a lot of struggles, finally to go out there and not have to be worried about everything."

In men's play Friday, No 3 seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov lost to Sargis Sapaghtian 6-7, 7-6, 6-2. Kafelnikov double faulted on set point to lose the second-set tiebreaker, then double-faulted on break point to lose the opening game of the third set.

"I'm not going to give him any credit at all," Kafelnikov said. "I gave him the match, that's it. I should have won in straight sets."

The Russian came into the tournament with a shot at the No 1 ranking.

Jim Courier earned a second-round match against longtime friend and foe Peter Sampras. The two former Lipton champions were to meet today for the 20th time on ATP Tour in a rivalry that dates back to their days as juniors.

"It's an early-round kind of appetizer for the fans," said Courier, who advanced by beating Jan Frode Andersen 7-6, 6-2.

Fifth-seeded Patrick Rafter of Australia beat countryman Andrew Ilie in their first career meeting, 6-3, 7-5. Also winning were No 6 Tim Henman of Britain, No 7 Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands, and No 12 Greg Rusedski of Britain. Kenneth Carlsen of Denmark upset No 13 Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia for the first time in their seven matches, 6-2, 3-6, 6-4.

On the women's side, No 1 Martina Hingis of Switzerland beat Karina Habudova of Slovakia 6-1, 6-4, and No 3 Monica Seles defeated fellow American Brie Rippner 6-3, 7-5. France's Amelie Mauresmo and Americans Mary Joe Fernandez and

Chanda Rubin also won.

Capriati, at 22, has been particularly on the comeback trail since personal problems derailed her career in the mid-1990s. Despite a humble 2-4 record this year, she claims to have rediscovered the joy of playing.

"Right now I feel the best that I've felt in a long time," she said. "What I want out of tennis is not necessarily just winning. I just want to play well and have fun playing well."

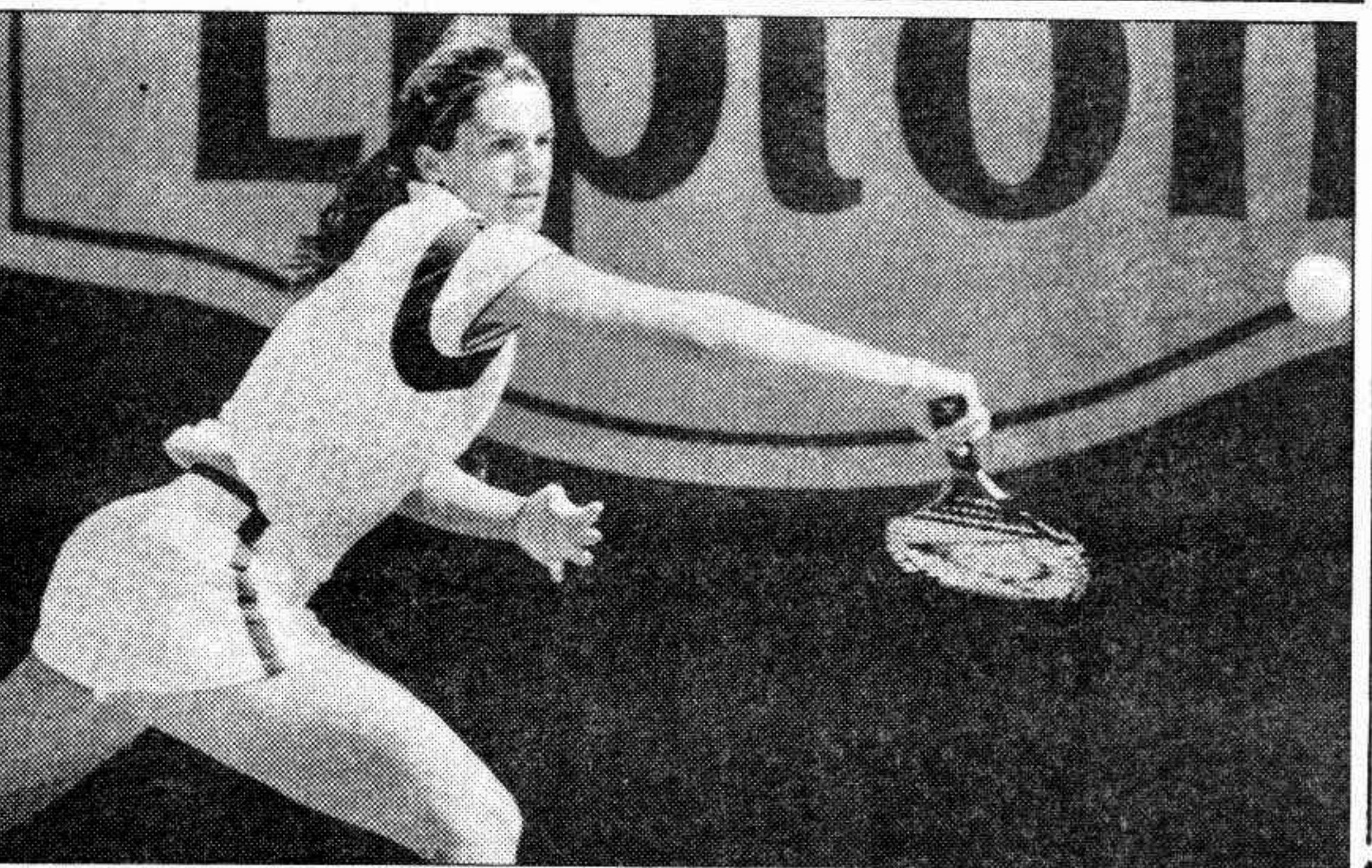
At one time, Graf vs Capriati was a much-anticipated showdown on the WTA Tour. Now they're friendly practice partners, and Friday's match was their first since 1993.

Despite the lopsided score, Graf said Capriati seems rejuvenated.

"You can sense that she wants to play. She's really getting into it," Graf said. "Hopefully she'll get into a kind of rhythm to get into tournaments and gain some confidence by winning matches."

Capriati plans a full schedule this year, but cheerfully admits she might never again play with the skill and confidence that made her a French open semifinalist at age 14.

"It's been so long since I've been out there in the quarters, the semis, the finals, the important matches against top players," she said. "Mentally I still have to get all that back — if I ever get there."



Amelie Mauresmo of France stretches for a return in her match against China's Fang Li at Lipton Championships on Mar 19. — AFP photo

Coles faces further test

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Mar 20 (AP): An early morning fax from a jilted spouse has the International Olympic Committee looking angry at the conduct of one of its members.

In a move that ended a week of uncertainty and took the case out of the hands of one of its top-ranking officers, the IOC said Friday its executive board would investigate Australian member Phil Coles for allegedly accepting expensive jewelry from a bid city.

"As a result of the fact that a communication has been received from a third party, the executive board decided to investigate the matter further," an IOC statement said.

Georgina Coles, who split with Australian IOC member Phil Coles in a bitter divorce almost six years ago, told IOC investigators that the couple received a gold-and-diamond necklace and cufflinks, which she turned into earrings, while visiting Athens' failed Olympic bid in 1990.

The items have been appraised at 6,300 dollars — far beyond the IOC's 150 dollars limit on gifts from bid cities.

Already slapped with a severe censure for accepting lavish travel in the Salt Lake City bid scandal, Phil Coles could be expelled if the board finds he violated the rules again.

In giving the matter to the executive board, the IOC abolished a five-member investigation panel that produced six expulsions, four resignations and 10 warnings in the IOC's worst scandal, the million-dollar vote-buying scheme of Salt Lake City's successful 2002 bid.

That took the case out of the

control of Dick Pound, an IOC vice president from Canada who headed the ad-hoc panel and is a longtime friend of Coles.

The jewelry has been the focus of news reports in Australia for the past week, about the time Coles arrived in Lausanne for an emergency IOC assembly that expelled six members and adopted measures described as the first steps of reform in the wake of the Olympics' worst corruption case.

Pound said Thursday he would act if Georgina Coles sent him information. When he arrived at the committee's headquarters Friday for an executive board meeting, there was a fax from Australia.

"I can confirm that jewelry (a set of diamond cufflinks and a gold necklace) was given to Mr Coles and myself in Athens by a man involved in the Athens bid for the 1996 Olympic Games," Georgina Coles wrote. "This occurred in 1990."

ROK, Japan vow to help each other

SEOUL, Mar 20: South Korea and Japan today pledged to work together to ensure that the 2002 football World Cup to be co-hosted by both countries is successful, reports AP.

"We agreed to strengthen further efforts to ensure the successful co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup," President Kim Dae-jung said after a summit with Japanese Premier Keizo Obuchi.

The two nations are trying to put decades of antagonism behind them to jointly stage the event.

"I had the cufflinks made into earrings. This is my final statement on the matter."

Athens lost the 1996 race to Atlanta in September 1999. Finishing fourth in that contest was Melbourne, Australia.

Phil Coles appeared before the executive board and said he "appreciated the opportunity to explain the situation."

He said he would remain on leave from the board of the organising committee for next year's Summer Games in Sydney, Australia, "until the matter is resolved."

Coles said his ex-wife's actions were "a said development."

"She was obviously shown where to send it," he said adding that he had "absolutely" no plans to resign from the IOC despite mounting pressure.

In Sydney, Olympics boss Michael Knight said the IOC had to investigate the jewelry case and called on Coles to "stop the pain" by quitting his board of SOCOG, the organising committee for the 2000 Games.

Coles' case came up during a meeting of the executive board with Sydney organisers.

"It's their business, not mine," SOCOG chief executive Sandy Hollway said. "They showed us a copy of the letter and said they want to deliberate on it."

He said SOCOG was still 135 million dollars short of its sponsorship revenue target, with 53 million dollars still to be identified. But he was confident much of the money will be raised.

"We acknowledge the climate has not been ideal, but so far it has not hurt us on the sponsorship side," he said. "All the sponsors want the scandal cleaned up and they have all stayed solid."

Hodde obsessed with Drewery!

LONDON, Mar 20: Former England coach Glenn Hodde says his faith healer Eileen Drewery could have saved midfielder David Beckham from getting a red card against Argentina if he had taken her to last summer's World Cup, reports AP.

"The sad situation of David being sent off might have been averted if we'd have had somebody there that could have cut in out at source, if you like," he said on a Channel 4 documentary to be screened next week.

"I think Eileen could have helped young David if he'd been available maybe to have helped him mentally."

"She was due to come out, I was going to bring her out later on, but that was where I made a mistake and it was a personal mistake that I should have perhaps had her there."

Although Hodde claims he does not feel bitterness towards anybody, he again criticises British Sports Minister Tony Banks for his handling of the disabled row which led to his sacking in February.

"I was head coach of England and he was the sports minister, he should have phoned me and found out what I actually said and what my beliefs were."

"For him to say my beliefs are unacceptable means it is unacceptable for millions and millions of people who believe in the same thing as I do. I was very disappointed with that. I must say."

Belgrade still on for World TT meet

BELGRADE, Mar 20 (Reuters): The World Table Tennis Championships are still set for Belgrade but with a final decision to be made on Thursday, an International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) team was inspecting sites in the city on Saturday and executive vice-president Niels Bergstroem said. "Up to March 25 there is no other alternative to Belgrade being considered."

The ITTF said on Monday its executive committee would make a final decision on March 25. The United States and several other countries have pulled out of the championships, scheduled for April 26-May 9, fearing for players' safety, given the region's instability and fighting in Kosovo. Bergstroem said on Saturday: "I feel safe in Belgrade at the moment."

Colleague Afshin Badi said some 25 to 30 per cent of the work on the 20,000-seat capacity sports hall remained to be done, but organisers had assured them the minimum requirements would be met in time.

The hall has originally planned for the 1994 World Basketball Championships but Belgrade was stripped of the tournament because of war-related international sanctions and it lay half-finished for years. Yugoslav table tennis federation president Bratislav Andjolic said 90 countries had sent in applications so far.

Mike seeking cut in sentence

ROCKVILLE, Mar 20 (AP/Internet): Mike Tyson could soon have his wish bestowed and get out of jail and into the ring.

The former heavyweight champion has requested that his one-year sentence on assault charges be reduced to eight months, and a hearing is set for Friday at the Montgomery County District Court.

"He could literally be a free man shortly thereafter," said Robert Greenberg, one of Tyson's two lawyers in the Maryland case. He said Tyson will not attend the hearing.

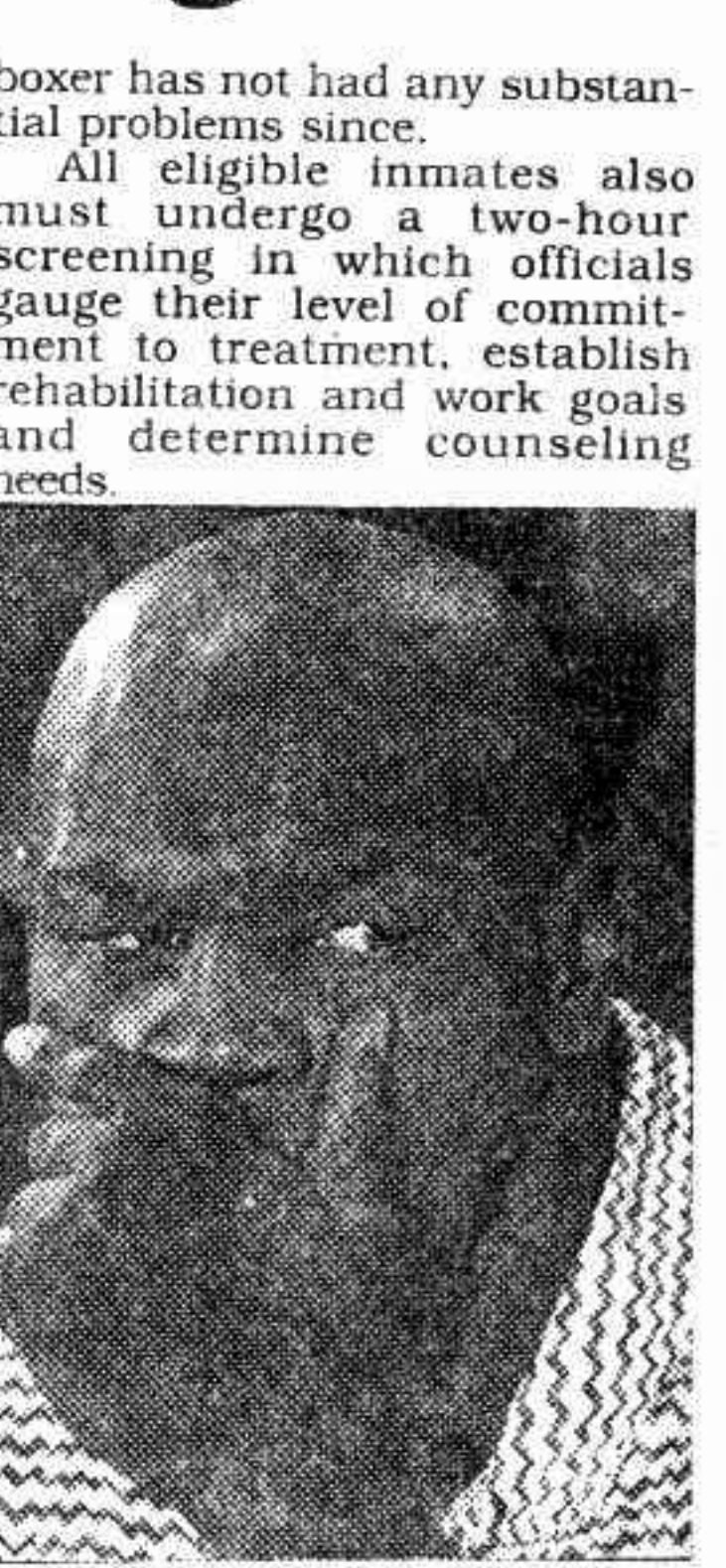
Tyson, jailed since Feb. 5 on charges he assaulted two motorists after a minor traffic accident last August, would not have been eligible for early release until July under his imposed sentence.

But if Judge Stephen Johnson approves the motion, he could be eligible that afternoon, said Eric Seleznow, a spokesman for the county's Department of Correction and Rehabilitation.

In such cases, once the judge rules, corrections officials evaluate each inmate to determine whether he is ready for early release, Seleznow said.

But, Seleznow added, "I don't want (people) to think just because the judge cuts his time, he's going to be going right away."

Disciplinary problems are taken into consideration. Last month, Tyson tossed a TV set. Seleznow said the 32-year-old



MIKE TYSON

Seleznow would not estimate when Tyson might meet those and other requirements that could free him from the jail.

"He could potentially go in three days or he could go months later," Seleznow said.

Tyson, however, probably will not follow the normal pre-release track in which inmates are sent first to a halfway-house and then to home elec-

tronic monitoring.

"There would be problems with the crowds and media attention at the open facility," Seleznow said.

Instead, Tyson probably would be placed directly on electronic monitoring at the Bethesda, Md., home he shares with his wife Monica.

Tyson likely would be permitted to train during the day, required to submit urinalysis samples and undergo extensive therapy with his personal psychiatrist and a jail-appointed counselor, Seleznow said.

He could complete such court-ordered monitoring by September, depending on his conduct and whether the judge agrees to reduce his sentence, said Russ Hamill, acting director of the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation.

Hamill said that schedule would include the 60-day sentence Indiana has imposed for violating his probation on a 1992 rape conviction.

Tyson would then have to complete two years of supervised probation.

Annual chess

COMILLA, Mar 20: The annual chess competition organised by District Sport Association, Comilla, began at the local gymnasium here today, reports APB.

Some 130 competitors including 18 girls are taking part in the competition. The first round of the event concluded today.



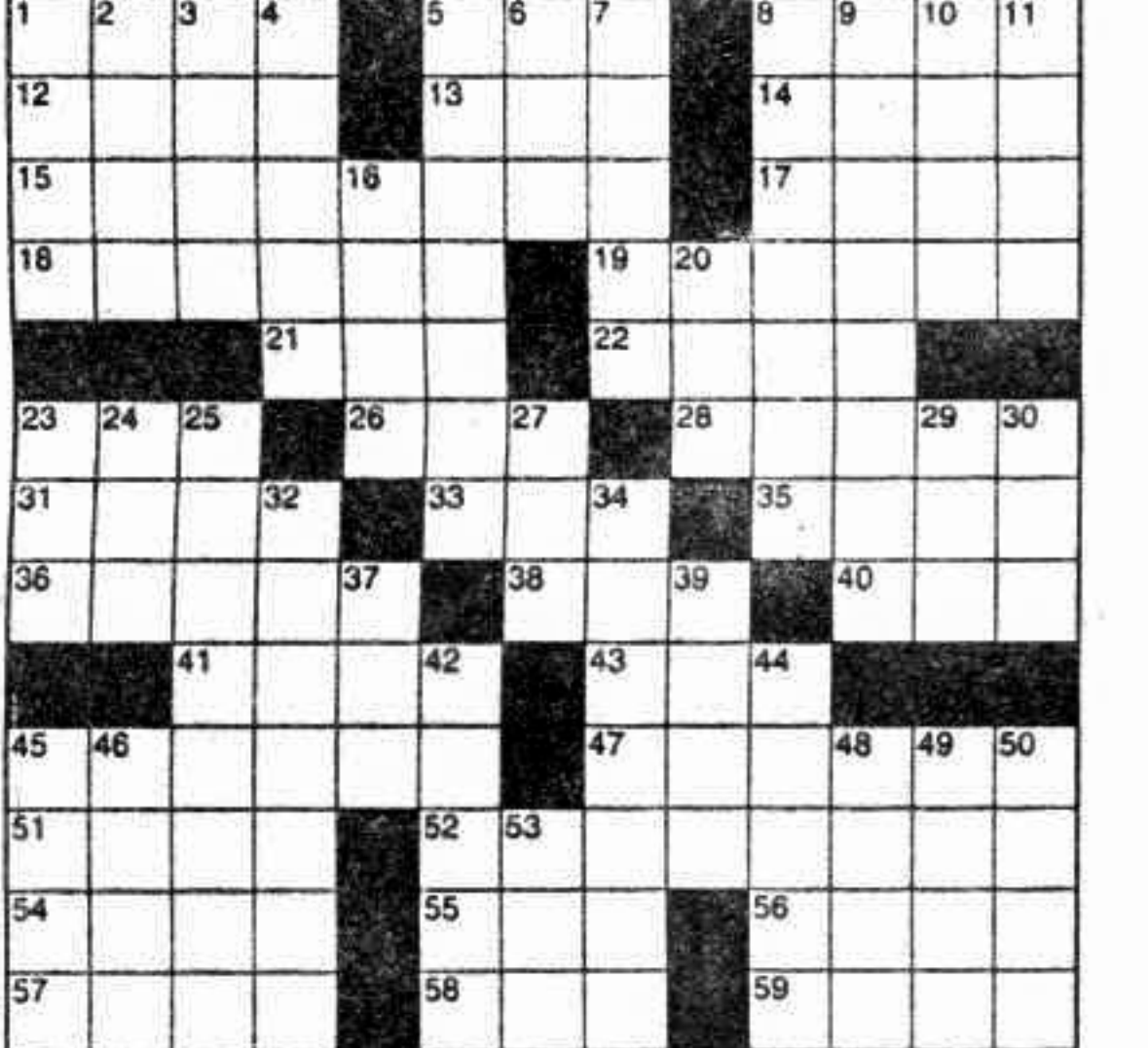
International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch (R) listens to a query at a press conference in Lausanne, Switzerland on March 18. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Sudden fancy
5 Jackson 5 hit
8 Theater award
12 Proposed continental currency
13 Abbr. on a book's binding
14 Blueprint
15 "Mouse"
17 El Texas
18 Loan star?
19 Herds
21 Solidify
22 Fleetwood Mac hit
23 Gist
26 Guitar-neck feature
28 Costume
31 Earthenware pot
33 Johnny's band-leader
35 Cupola
36 "Unsolved Mysteries" host
38 Slot insert

40 Vanna's cohort
41 Part of the face
1 "Dragnet" star
45 Inuit
47 Bicycle seat style
51 Love too much
52 Flight recorder
54 Writer
Kingsley
56 Journal
58 Come
59 Together
58 Ram's
Solution time: 21 mins.

DOWN
2 Lat. bit
3 "Dragnet" star
2 Island dance
3 OPEC member
4 Makes fun of
5 Dodged
6 Tarzan's son
7 Split
8 Anti
9 Use asphalt
10 "All — of
37 Kipling lad
39 Bric-a-brac
42 Aristocratic
44 Bracelet locale
45 Dutch treat
46 To a degree
48 Touch
49 Asta's mistress
50 Skater's jump
53 Depressed



CRYPTOQUIP
K L A V D I I Q C Q I D C L D B P R G D B
A D I H D M D G T D W C T P K I E
C Q M D G T D H V L P B D W
R P V Q C K B B V E Q W
Yesterday's Cryptogram: WHAT MIGHT YOU NAME SOME GIRL WHO TRULY RELISHED EATING? DINAH.

Today's Cryptogram clue: L equals M

The Cryptogram 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.