

Sport

Board crisis cripples SL cricket

COLOMBO, Apr 11 (AFP/Internet): Sri Lanka's premier league cricket matches were indefinitely postponed following the suspension of the newly-elected Cricket Board, officials here said Sunday.

The matches were due to be played Saturday but the umpires decided against going ahead because of last week's court ruling suspending the cricket board pending an inquiry into last month's elections, officials said.

Colombo district judge A.M.A. Salam ordered the newly-elected executive committee headed by Thilanga Sumathipala not to function until April 19, after a challenge by a defeated candidate is heard.

The chief executive officer of the Board, Dhammika Ranatunga, who is not an elected member, said the committee that functioned until the March elections will now be in charge.

Sumathipala's election is challenged by defeated candidate Chitto Ratwatte, who is a brother of Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike and an uncle of President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Last month's elections to the cricket board were marred by allegations of widespread malpractice, intimidation and assaults.

Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Apr 11: Youth Cricket School and Janapriya Sporting Club moved into the final of the Siraj memorial kishore cricket league.

In the first semifinal at the collocate playground Youth Cricket School defeated Bandhri Krishna Chakrabarti by 36 runs.

Battling first, Youth Cricket School scored 180 for five in the stipulated 25 overs. Sunam and Sijar made the highest 54 and 49 runs respectively.

In reply, Bandhri KC went all out scoring only 84 in 15.3 overs.

In the second semifinal, Janapriya Sporting Club defeated Laxmiyur Cricketers Club by 17 runs.

Battling first, Janapriya scored 107 for nine in 23.5 overs.

In reply, Laxmiyur Cricketers Club lost all wickets for 90 in 22.2 overs.

The final match will be held tomorrow in the same venue.

Pahela Baishakh sports festival

A day-long Cute Baishakhi sports festival will be held on Wednesday at the Outer Stadium to celebrate "Pahela Baishakh", the first day of the Bangla year, reports UNB.

NSC secretary A S M Ali Kabir will inaugurate the festival while State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader will distribute the prizes. The meet has been sponsored by Mousumi Industries Limited.

Four disciplines — swimming, Kabaddi, Wrestling and Kho Kho — are included in the first ever sports festival of its kind that will start at 9 am and conclude at 5 pm.

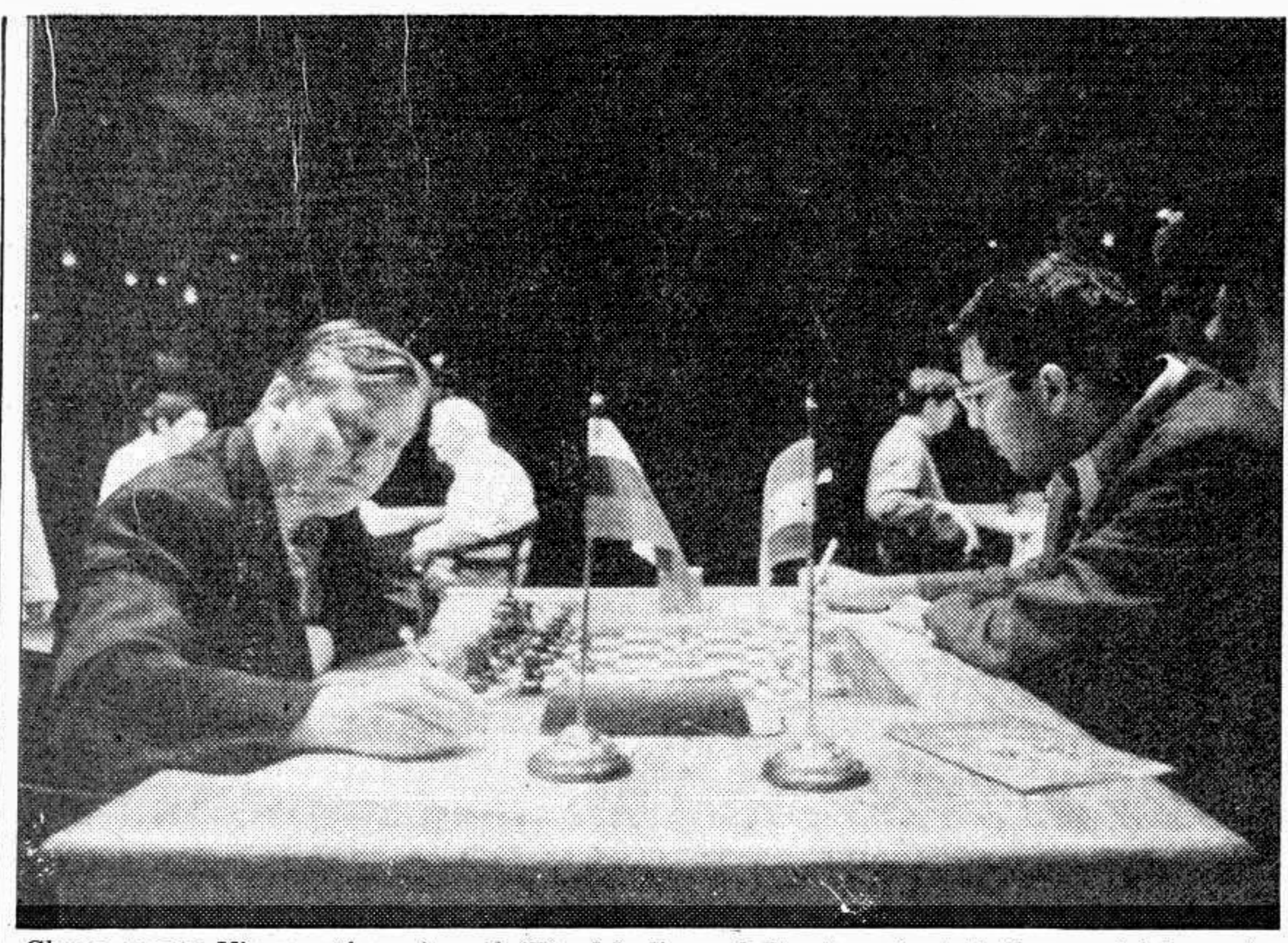
Kabaddi, wrestling and kho kho competition will be held at the Outer Stadium, while swimming will be held at the Ramna Lake.

The details of the meet were disclosed by the festival committee chairman Monir Hossain at a press conference at the kho kho federation office yesterday.

Eight teams will take part in the Kabaddi competition, six schools in the kho kho meet, 16 grapplers of the present SAF Games camp will take part in wrestling while the swimming will be open to all.

Police fine Vitesse fans

AMSTERDAM, Apr 11 (Reuters/Internet): Police arrested 134 Vitesse Arnhem fans and fined them for failing to obey an instruction to leave the vicinity of the club's Gelderme ground following the match against FC Twente.



Chess greats Viswanathan Anand (R) of India and Russian Anatoli Karpov taking notes during their International tournament match at Sevilla on April 10. — AFP photo

Villa's 11-game jinx over

LONDON, Apr 11 (Reuters/Internet): Aston Villa collected their first win in 11 league games on Saturday as they beat 10-man Southampton 3-0 at Villa Park in the English Premier League.

On a key day dominated by the battle to avoid relegation Middlesbrough beat Charlton Athletic 2-0. Derby County defeated bottom side Nottingham Forest 1-0 and Leicester City against West Ham United ended goalless.

Southampton have 30 points with five games remaining. Everton, who play Coventry on Sunday, Blackburn and Charlton all have 31. Forest have 21 points and look certain to be relegated.

The big guns are in action on Sunday when Manchester United played Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur play Newcastle United in the F.A. Cup semifinals. Third-placed Chelsea, five points behind leaders Manchester United, visit Wimbledon in the league.

Villa, top of the league at the start of the year, had managed just three points from their last 10 games but were due a win against Southampton who have the league's worst away record.

After Mark Draper had shot Villa ahead in the 13th minute, the game turned in the 40th when Southampton's Norwegian defender Claus Lundekvam sent off for his second harsh booking, sparking furious protests from his team mates and the bench.

Second from bottom Southampton were always struggling after Lundekvam's red card. "It changed the face of the game, it was a killer for us," said Southampton coach Dave Jones.

"It doesn't matter what the referee says to me about the sending off - I just don't understand it."

Charlton were below par at Middlesbrough and were undone by Houghton and Ricard. The Colombian scored his 18th of the season to put Boro ahead after 35 minutes and then set up Robbie Mustoe for the second after an hour.

Forest trail Southampton by nine points and look doomed after going down to an 85th minute Horacio Carbonari goal at local rivals Derby.

Home keeper Russell Hought was sent off in the 66th minute for a rash challenge on Alan Roger while Forest's Richard Gough followed for his second booking, a foul on Paolo Wanchope 10 minutes from time.

Forest manager Ron Atkinson refused to accept relegation was a formality but admitted: "It ain't looking too clever."

He said he would be taking disciplinary action against Pierre Van Hooijdonk after the Dutch striker stormed out of the ground before full time after being substituted.

Dragomir downs Kournikova

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida, Apr 11: Unseeded and relatively unknown Ruxandra Dragomir continued her unexpected run through the Bausch and Lomb Championships Saturday, defeating No 9 seed Anna Kournikova 6-3, 7-5 in the semifinals, reports AP.

She will face in Sunday's final second-seeded Monica Seles, who rolled to 6-0, 6-1 victory over No 7 Conchita Martinez for her 15th victory in 16 lifetime meetings between the two.

Thus ended the stranglehold that teenagers have had on women's tennis recently, with a final-round showdown between Venus and Serena Williams two weeks ago at Key Biscayne and the Kournikova-Martina Hingis final last week at Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Instead, it will be Seles, who is working her way out of a slump that dated to the beginning of the year, against Dragomir, the 26-year-old Romanian, ranked 38th by the WTA. Four and looking for her first title in the United States.

"It's going to be huge for me," Dragomir said. "To beat Monica would be great. But I don't like to think about it because if I do, I get too excited."

Dragomir's victory was a surprise, especially considering the way Kournikova had been playing the past two weeks.

Dragomir engineered the win by playing aggressively, going to the net often on the slow, green clay of Amelia Island Plantation, and mixing spin with power that kept Kournikova off balance.

"She likes when you give her rhythm, and she likes the pace very much," Dragomir said. "I knew I would have to mix it up, play her with a lot of spin and sometimes come to the net. I did and it seemed like every shot worked for me."

Tied 3-3 in the second set, the players exchanged service breaks five straight times until Dragomir took a 6-5 lead with a chance to serve out the match. Then, she went to a power game, with a pair of serve-and-volley winners followed by two service winners on serves she hit at 102 and 96 mph.

She celebrated with her hands held high, playing to a crowd that had to hunt for her most of the week, with her early round matches against other unseeded opponents relegated to the outside courts.

Kournikova dropped out of the doubles competition Friday with a strained hip adductor. She said that, plus her heavy schedule — 11 matches over 13 days — started taking a toll.

"I probably tried to finish points too quickly to avoid running too much," she said. "But I don't want to find excuses. I think she played well."

Seles came to this event encountering a confidence crisis after early exits her last three tournaments.

She rededicated herself to a more strenuous workout regimen and decided to put her doubles matches on hold. The results started showing immediately.

That has definitely helped me this week to conserve my energy," said Seles, seeking her first championship since last September in Tokyo. "I was just so tired. But I think as you get more fit, you have more energy. Then, you can play more."

In making her first final of the year, she has lost a total of only nine games in four matches. True to form, she barely broke a sweat against Martinez in a match that lasted just 45 minutes.

"Sometimes this happens, especially when I play Monica," Martinez said. "You have to be sharp when you play her. Monica is a good player, she's playing well right now. She can win any of the Grand Slams."

Black, Schuttler enter final

MADRAS, Apr 11: Byron Black of Zimbabwe and Rainer Schuttler of Germany routed their Dutch opponents with little trouble Saturday, reaching the final of the Gold Flake Open, reports AP.

Black took about an hour to dispatch eighth seed John Van Lottum 6-1, 6-1, while No. 7 Schuttler crushed unseeded Peter Wessel 6-1, 6-3.

Black continued the form he demonstrated all week, breaking Van Lottum's service in the second and sixth games to take the first set in 37 minutes.

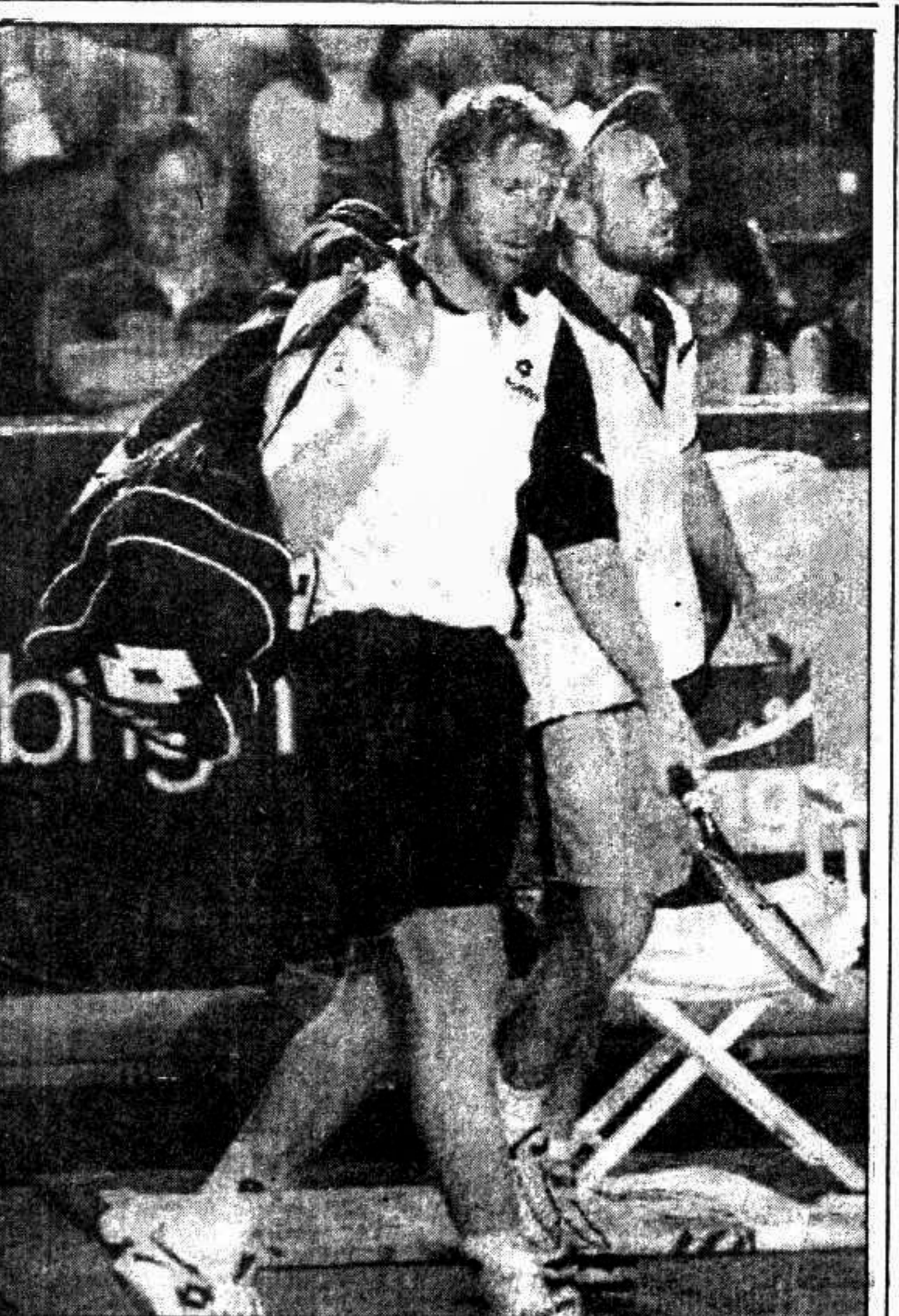
"I always play well coming off a David Cup tie," said Black, 29, who flew in from Harare after Davis Cup matches against Australia. "Everything is clicking for me right now."

Schuttler had only slightly more trouble against Wessel, winning four straight games before the Dutchman broke the German's service in the fifth game.

"I played really well. I served good," Schuttler said.

The home crowd, however, appeared more interested in the doubles, where Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes thrilled the capacity crowd by overcoming a first-set deficit and rallying to beat No 3 seeds Jens Knippschild of Germany and Mikael Tillstrom of Sweden to reach the final.

Paes and Bhupathi won 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 to set up a chance for a third consecutive Gold Flake title.



Andre Agassi and Boris Becker walk off the court after raif halted play in the third set of Salem Open final in Hong Kong yesterday. — Internet photo

Macala named Saudi coach

RIYADH, Apr 11: Saudi Arabia on Saturday hired Czech coach Milan Macala to head the national soccer squad as an agreement was signed between Prince Sultan bin Fahd, deputy president of the Saudi Soccer Federation, and Macala, reports AP.

Macala replaces German Otto Pfister.

"The Saudi Soccer Federation puts all its resources at the disposal of coach Macala to achieve the hopes for the Kingdom's team during the coming period," Prince Sultan said after signing the two-year contract.

Macala, who is the former coach of the Kuwaiti national team, will be paid 30,000 dollars monthly plus a car and house, Saudi soccer officials said on condition of anonymity.

Macala replaced German Pfister, who took Saudi Arabia to the second round in the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

Pfister was rehired last year to replace Carlos Alberto Parreira of Brazil, who was sacked after the Saudi's poor performance in the 1998 World Cup. The team was the first to be eliminated after losses to Denmark and eventual champions France, and a draw with South Africa.

The Saudi team has gone through nearly 10 coaches in four years.

Nations' cup Tunisia earn a place

CAIRO, Apr 11: Tunisia became the first team to qualify for the African Nations' Cup finals on Saturday, beating Uganda 2-0 to clinch their place among the final 16, reports AP.

Goals by Hassan Gabisi in the 18th and Faouzi Rouissi in the 41st lifted Tunisia in Kampala, sending the country to their fourth straight appearance in the final of the biennial continental championship.

The victory was Tunisia's fourth in as many qualifying games, giving them 12 points and moving eight ahead of both Algeria and Liberia in Group 7.

Uganda led to 0-1-3 and last in the four-team group.

Tunisia join defending champions Egypt and co-hosts Nigeria and Ghana, who get automatic places in the finals.

Elsewhere, Zambia moved to the verge of qualifying with a 1-0 victory over Kenya in Lusaka; Gabon upset South Africa 1-0 in Libreville; Gabon; Mauritius and Angola drew 1-1 in Curepipe, Mauritius; and Morocco and Togo drew 1-1.

Morocco hosted Togo in a Saturday night match.

On Friday, Algeria routed Liberia 4-1 in Annaba, Algeria. The remainder of the games were set for Saturday: Mozambique vs. Cameroon; Zambia vs. Mali; Ivory Coast vs. Republic of Congo; Burkina Faso vs. Burundi and Congo vs. Madagascar.

In Lusaka, Kenya, Frazier Kimwandu's eighth-minute goal gave Zambia a 1-0 victory, and put his country just shy of their sixth straight appearance in the finals.

Zambia improved to 3-1-0 and 10 points in Group 6, six points ahead of both Madagascar and Congo. Zambia need only a draw in one of their two remaining games, against Madagascar on June 5 or Congo on June 20 — both at home, to guarantee its place.

Kenya fell to 0-1-3 and was eliminated from any chance of qualifying.

In Libreville, and 87th minute penalty kick by Theodore Zue Nguema moved Gabon into second place in Group 4.

Gabon improved to 2-0-2 with six points, one behind South Africa (2-1-1), who — like Zambia — could have all but wrapped up their place with a victory. The upset gave Gabon some revenge for the 4-1 beating they took in South Africa on February 25.

Morocco just missed wrapping up their place in the finals out of Group 2. With two teams from the three-team group assured of advancing, Morocco let their berth slip away for the moment when Oywole Djima scored in the 68th minute for Togo.

Youssef Chippo gave Morocco the lead in the 38th. The draw left Morocco with a 1-2-0 record and five points, still atop the group by one point. Togo improved to 1-1-1 and four points, with Guinea remaining at 0-1-1 and at the bottom.

Morocco only need a draw against Guinea on June 6 at home to assure itself of a place in the finals.

Favourites Nantes in semis

PARIS, Apr 11 (Reuters/Internet): Nantes, the last first division team left in the French Cup quarter-finals, beat second division En Avant Guingamp 2-0 on Saturday to reach the last four.

The Canaries, who had not won in their last five games, looked tentative throughout but scored in each half through Olivier Monterrubio in the 29th minute and Yves Deroff in the dying minutes of the match.



Tenerife's Yugoslav booter Slavisa Jokanovic (R) taking control of the ball while Barcelona's Portuguese superstar Luis Figo watches during their Spanish Primera Liga clash at Tenerife on April 10. Barca won 3-2. — AFP photo

Barca go nine points clear

MADRID, Apr 11 (Reuters/Internet): Barcelona stretched their lead at the top of the Spanish first division to nine points on Saturday with a scrappy 3-2 victory over nine-man Tenerife.

The Spanish champions were made to work hard by their relegation-threatened hosts, who fought back gamely from 2-0 and 3-1 down despite having two players sent off for dissent in a bad-tempered second half.

Tenerife, outclassed in a first period that ended 3-1, gave everything in the second as they recovered to 3-2 with a great goal from Roy Makaay on 56 minutes.

But the sending-off of their first-half goalscorer Antonio Pinilla midway through the second half, followed by a second red for Alexis Suarez in injury time, killed off their hopes.

Barcelona, who have won their last five league games, made a sluggish start but took the lead on 17 minutes with a well-worked move.

Luis Figo fed Michael Reiziger on the right and the Dutch defender's cross was met by his compatriot Phillip Cocu, who slid home.

Barcelona doubled their advantage nine minutes before the break with a wonderful goal from Rivaldo. The Brazilian, bursting through the middle, beat two defenders before working a neat one-two with Patrick Kluyvert and finishing deftly from an acute angle.

Tenerife fought back strongly and got back in the game on 44 minutes as Pinilla latched on to a loose ball in the penalty area and fired into the roof of the net.

The islanders then let their guard slip, however, as Barca re-established their two-goal lead in first-half injury time, with Rivaldo and Kluyvert again prominent.

Another strong run through the middle saw the Brazilian take out the entire Tenerife defence before slipping the ball out wide to Kluyvert on the left.

The Dutch striker crossed right to the unmarked Figo, who turned the ball back for Albert Celades to lash in.

The second half started just as briskly, with Roy Makaay and Pinilla both going close for the home side.

And Tenerife got themselves back into the game on 56 minutes as Makaay raced past a flat-footed Winston Bogarde on the left and slipped the ball between Ruud Hesp's legs.

Tenerife stepped up the pressure and created a number of chances to snatch an unlikely point from their illustrious visitors.

But a red card on 74 minutes for Pinilla — apparently for protesting at the referee's refusal to award a penalty for handball against Cocu — left them with too much to do and a second red for Suarez deep in injury time saw the contest end on a sour note.

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Sluggish Bayern held

BONN, Apr 11 (Reuters/Internet): Runaway Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich, looking tired three days after their 3-3 European Cup battle with Dynamo Kiev, could only manage a 1-1 draw with lowly Schalke 04 on Saturday.

Bayern looked to have left a lot of strength behind in Kiev in the first leg of Wednesday's semifinal tie but took the lead through striker Alexander Zickler four minutes into the second half.

But Schalke, needing points to stay clear of the relegation zone, levelled thanks to midfielder Oliver Held in the 62nd.

The Munich club are now 13 points clear of Bayer Leverkusen, who used a double strike from Ulf Kirsten to beat Eintracht Frankfurt 2-1.

The German international scored in the 25th and 29th minutes. Midfielder Thomas Zampach reduced the arrears for Eintracht in the 63rd minute.

Borussia Muenchengladbach, Bayern's most dangerous rivals in the 70s, headed even further the other way after a 2-0 defeat by fellow strugglers Nuremberg.

Nuremberg moved ahead on Thomas Ziemer's powerful 25-metre shot in the 39th minute and fellow midfielder Marc Overkamp sealed their win from close range in the 79th.

Muenchengladbach, who won five German crowns and lifted the UEFA Cup twice in the 1970, stuck to the bottom of the 18-strong league.

Germany striker Oliver Neuville opened the scoring for Rostock with an astute lob in the 60th minute and Nigerian striker Victor Agali completed their victory after a brilliant solo run in the 78th minute.

Dortmund goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was sent off in the dying moments for pulling Rostock midfielder Timo Lange's hair. Lange followed him off as provoking Lehmann earned him his second booking. Two goals from striker Roy Praeger helped VfL Wolfsburg to a 2-1 victory over Kaiserslautern.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes a crossword grid and a list of clues for across and down words.

CRYPTOQUIP. Includes a cryptogram grid and the solution: M W W V K T D T F V I L H V H I F I Y E I Q L: "V K T H E J H F H D W T S M E" H F M S Q V F - F T T S Y J H T. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A FATIGUED BATHTUB SALESMAN MIGHT BE HEARD TO LAMENT, "I FEEL SO DRAINED."