

Sport

14-year-old Croat joins Bordeaux

BORDEAUX, France, July 17: French champions Girondins Bordeaux have signed 14-year-old Croatian Filip Marcic from Hajduk Split, the club said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Bordeaux beat Italy's Juventus in the race for the talented young striker, who was already a member of Hajduk's under-17 side.

Their youth scheme, run by former French World Cup defender Patrick Battiston, bore excellent results last season with victory in both the French under-15 and under-17 championships.

"The titles are not an end. The goal is to produce competitive teams in which players can progress to play one day play with the professionals at the Stade Lescure," Battiston said.

"At the same time we do scouting and recruiting which now goes beyond (French) borders. But 90 per cent of the players in the under-17 championship side are from the (Bordeaux) region."

Guinean striker Pascal Feindouno, a product of the youth scheme, has signed his first professional contract with the club. Feindouno scored the winner in Bordeaux's 3-2 victory at Paris St Germain which secured the first division title in May.

Spanish clubs cleared to float

MADRID, July 17: Spanish football clubs will have the chance to follow the lead of some of Europe's other major teams from 2002 when they will be allowed to float on the stock market, the government said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Under new rules for limited sporting companies, the government has also opened the way for foreigners to invest in Spanish clubs.

But no individual will be able to own more than five per cent of more than one club and the acquisition of 25 per cent of a team by any one person will need sports council approval.

The changes to ownership rules will come into force soon but stock market floatations may only begin from January 1, 2002.

The government said clubs needed a transition period to demonstrate the necessary accountability and transparency in their financial dealings.

Several Spanish clubs have been lobbying hard for changes to the law to follow the likes of Manchester United by going public to raise cash.

The changes will not affect Spain's two largest clubs, however. Real Madrid and Barcelona are both owned by their members and have promised to resist the move to become limited companies.

Boskov new Yugoslav coach

BELGRADE, July 17: Vujadin Boskov will replace Milorad Zivadinovic as the coach of the Yugoslav national team, Yugoslav Football Association (FSJ) general secretary Branko Bulatovic said on Friday, reports Reuters.

"There is absolute consensus in the association that Boskov is the right man for the job," said Bulatovic, adding that the choice was certain to be formally approved at a meeting of the FSJ executive board on July 24.

He said the entire FSJ management as well as team stars were in favour of Boskov.

Bulatovic said Boskov had, as a member of the FSJ's executive board in charge of the national team, been present at all matches and training sessions for the past two years.

"He is already intimately tied to the team and will simply make a step up to become the coach," said Bulatovic.

"Boskov accepted the offer without thinking — our conversation lasted five minutes," he said, adding that Boskov would lead the team in the Euro 2000 qualifying stage and the finals, if Yugoslavia goes through.

"Boskov is one of the biggest names in the history of Yugoslav soccer. He has 58 caps and won numerous national and European honours as a coach with clubs in Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy, including the Cup Winners Cup with Sampdoria," said Bulatovic.

Zivadinovic, who replaced Slobodan Santrac and spent less than a year as national coach, was sacked on Tuesday after he went on a controversial vacation and signed a lucrative deal with Saudi Arabian first division club Al Nasr of Riyadh.

Zivadinovic's surprise move left the Yugoslav team in a lurch after the postponement of four Euro 2000 matches due to NATO's 78-day bombing campaign of the country.

Despite the political upheaval in Yugoslavia over recent months, the team is well placed to qualify for the European finals in Belgium and the Netherlands next year.

The top group eight having won all three matches played so far, and face four crucial qualifiers packed into just three weeks in August and September.

They host bitter rivals Croatia on August 18 and then face the Republic of Ireland in Dublin on September 1.

The match was originally due to be played on June 5, but UEFA postponed it after the Irish authorities refused to issue visas to the Yugoslavs during the NATO campaign.

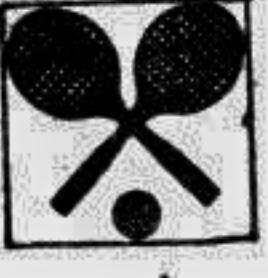
Yugoslavia also play neighbours Macedonia on September 4 and 8.



Lleyton Hewitt of Australia executing a forehand against Todd Martin of the USA during their Davis Cup fixture at Brookline on July 16.

— AFP photo

Australia go 2-0 up



BROOKLINE, Massachusetts, July 17: Teenaged Lleyton Hewitt made a smashing Davis Cup debut and US open champion Patrick Rafter completed the singles sweep Friday as Australia took a commanding 2-0 lead over the United States in their Davis Cup quarterfinals.

Hewitt, a late replacement for injured Mark Philippoussis, outplayed the erratic Martin, who sprayed 79 unforced errors against the short, nimble-footed Australian, whose aggressive baseline game encourages comparison to Andre Agassi.

World number two Rafter belted 13 aces and 53 winners in defeating the 41st-ranked Courier, who won a pair of five-setters, including the fifth-match clincher, to lift the Americans over Britain in the first round at Birmingham.

That inspirational triumph is what motivated Sampras to return to Davis Cup play — and also to insist he play only doubles so as not to take a singles place so well-earned by Courier and Martin.

The Australian sweep put the US team on the brink of elimination.

Wimbledon champion Pete Sampras — the world's top-ranked player the last six years whose absence from the singles lineup is sure to stir debate —

will partner Alex O'Brien in today's doubles against Sandon Stolle and Mark Woodforde needing a win to keep the hosts in the running.

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IOC okays most of proposal



LONDON, July 17: International Olympic leaders say they have embraced most of the recommendations of a special American panel that blamed them for the Salt Lake City scandal, reports AP.

The International Olympic Committee said it has already accepted or is currently considering virtually all the suggestions made in March by the US Olympic Committee bid overruling panel.

The panel, chaired by former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, blasted the IOC for its role in the vote-buying affair stemming from Salt Lake's winning bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

Mitchell's report accused the IOC of fostering a "culture of improper gift giving" and made a series of recommendations to reform the organisation.

IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch met with Mitchell in London earlier this month to discuss the reform process. Also present was Ken Duberstein, a former White House chief of staff and vice-chairman of an ethics inquiry that criticised the IOC.

In a 15-page policy statement issued Thursday night, the IOC thanked Mitchell for his "very useful recommendations."

"All of them are being or will be considered very carefully," the IOC said. "Nearly all of them have already been integrated into the reform process currently underway."

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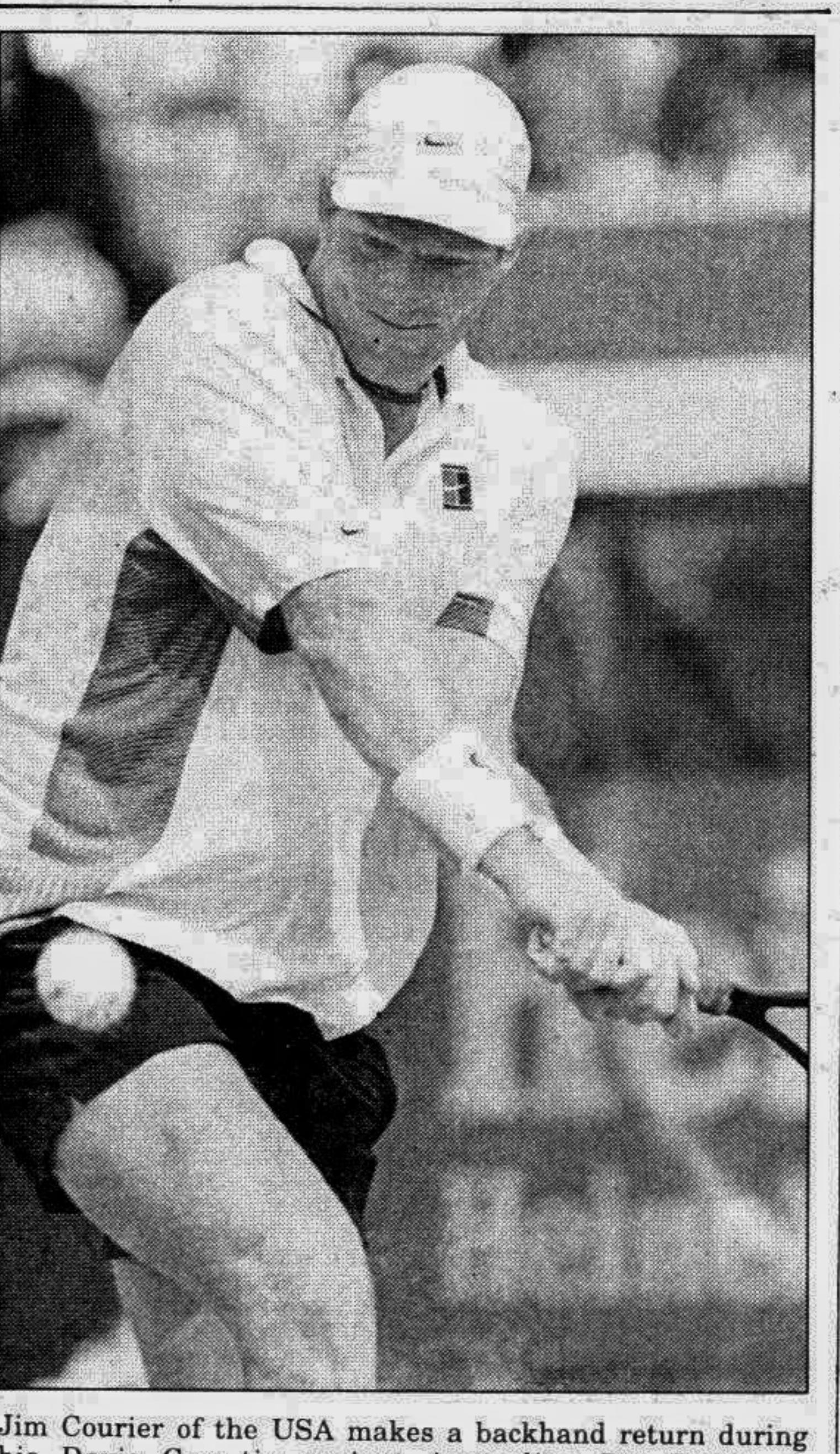
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Jim Courier of the USA makes a backhand return during his Davis Cup tie against Australian Pat Rafter at Brookline on July 16.

— AFP photo

Heat wave hits Brookline

BROOKLINE, July 17 (AP): Marjorie Marshall came all the way from England for the Davis Cup but spent most of a steamy Friday unable to see the matches from the shady spot she'd chosen under the stands.

"I was in my seat but not for long," the 67-year-old tennis fan said as the crowd cheered a point. "I'd rather hear what's going on than risk getting ill."

Jeanna Emerit, a trumpet player from Nashville, Tennessee, delivered bottles of water to other members of the Harvard University band that played occasionally while spending the day in the stands with the sun bearing down on them. It could have been worse. "Our usual uniform is black pants, black shoes, white shirt, black tie and a wool jacket," she said. "So this is a little bit better."

At one point, the temperature on the Longwood Cricket Club court was reported at 126 degrees (52 Celsius). That took a toll on the players.

Lleyton Hewitt of Australia, just 18 years old, handled it better than 29-year-old Todd Martin of the United States and won the first match of the best-of-five quarterfinals 6-4, 6-7, 6-3.

"I thought Todd was starting to get a little bit tired" in the third set, Hewitt said. "That was the most positive thing I could take out of it; that whatever I am feeling, I am sure he is feeling a lot worse than I am."

Martin said he had also suffered from the heat. "The first set I felt lousy, I was definitely a little shocked by the weather."

The temperature cooled a bit for the second match. The result though, was similar as Australia won again with Patrick Rafter beating Jim Courier 7-6, 6-4, 6-4. A win in Saturday's doubles match would clinch a semifinal spot for Australia even before Sunday's two singles matches.

While Sampras watched part of the first match from court-side with a wet towel over his head, Rafter chose to watch from the locker room.

"I didn't want to come out and watch," Rafter said. "It was too damn hot out there."

Some spectators waved small yellow fans to stir up a breeze. But at least 20 people were treated by medical personnel, mostly for heat-related problems.

Firefighter Joe Hingston of the Brookline Fire Department, working in a medical tent, put a positive spin on it.

"We're actually thankful we haven't had any heart attacks or strokes because there are a lot of older people here," Hingston said.

Marshall, the fan from Llanbourn, England, enjoyed the atmosphere of the event but was looking forward to returning to the Rhode Island home where she was staying with family members.

"I can't wait to get back and swim in the pool," she said.

Poland go for lucky stadium

WARSAW, July 17: The Polish soccer federation has moved its crunch Euro 2000 qualifying game against England to a small Warsaw stadium from a larger ground in the south-west of the country, reports Reuters.

The switch has been made despite the ground holding only 12,000. The government has offered to pay a third of the cost of adding another 5,700 temporary seats, with English fans due to get 10 per cent of all tickets.

The original venue in Chorzow, Silesia, would have held 32,000.

"Our players feel more comfortable in Warsaw and are more used to playing on the Legia ground, it's our lucky stadium," said Jozef Kolaowski, spokesman for the soccer federation.

The document said the IOC's future membership should include an unspecified number of national Olympic committee chiefs, the presidents of all major sports federations, active athletes chosen by their peers and a number of senior personalities."

The IOC said its long-term objective is to have a maximum total of 110-120 members. There are currently 104 members.

Both sides need to win the September 8 match. Poland have 12 points from six games, three more than England, who beat them 3-1 at Wembley in March.

But England's other match is home to Luxembourg, while the Poles have to play unbeaten group leaders Sweden away.

What spoke for the Legia stadium was the atmosphere and playing there is what the manager and the team want," federation head Michal Listkiewicz told Polish television.

Poland have won all six games they have played in Warsaw in the last two years, including two Euro championship qualifiers.

Hrbaty's 19-year-old younger brother George, who had been beating drums to encourage Dominik during his match against Yevgeny Kafelnikov, was attacked by a fellow spectator in the stands.

Former world number one, Kafelnikov went on to beat Hrbaty 2-6, 6-2, 6-7, 6-1, 7-5 in an emotional match which lasted nearly three hours to put Russia 2-0 in front after Marat Safin had defeated Karol Kucera 6-2, 6-4, 6-2, 6-4.

The second match was interrupted for several minutes in the third set after the attack on Hrbaty's brother. The Slovak player said the incident had not affected his performance.

"Actually it made me play better," Hrbaty said. "I wanted to show the Russians that matches are won on the court rather than in the stands."

Jim Courier of the USA makes a backhand return during his Davis Cup tie against Australian Pat Rafter at Brookline on July 16.

Pioline restores parity

PAU, France, July 17 (Reuters/AP): Cedric Pioline crushed Fernando Meligeni 6-3, 6-3 to put France 1-1 with Brazil after the opening singles of their Davis Cup quarterfinal on Friday.

Gustavo Kuerten had given Brazil the lead when he overcame cramps to beat Davis Cup debutant Sebastien Grosjean 6-2, 6-7, 6-7, 6-9, 6-7.

The Brazilians will decide at the last minute today whether to play Kuerten alongside Jaime Oncins in the doubles against Fabrice Santoro and Olivier Delaître as planned or rest him for Sunday's reverse singles.

Pioline, who helped France win the trophy in 1996, took less than two hours to beat French Open semifinalist Meligeni, a clay-court specialist.

On the fast synthetic surface of the Pau sports hall, Pioline — ranked five places above Meligeni at number 25 — exacted revenge for two defeats to the Brazilian on clay earlier in the season.

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break ball.

The opening singles, in contrast, was an epic match lasting four hours and 42 minutes in which former French Open champion Kuerten had to fight all the way after comfortably winning the first set.

Kuerten, who showed he could play on fast surfaces by reaching the Wimbledon quarterfinals two weeks ago, encountered strong resistance in which former French Open champion Kuerten had to fight all the way after comfortably winning the first set.

"I wanted to make him run rather than continue to play my own game. Unconsciously, in those cases, you modify your tactics ... And experience certainly made the difference."

RUSSIA IN CONTROL

In Moscow, Yevgeny Kafelnikov overcame a crowd brawl and a determined Dominik Hrbaty as Russia took a 2-0 lead

Marat Safin gave the Russians an early edge with an upset win over Slovakia's Karol Kucera.

The 19-year-old came back from a set and break down to win the second and third sets