

Anelka looking forward

MADRID, Aug 6: Controversial French international Nicolas Anelka took a final swipe at the English Premiership here on Thursday as he was introduced to the Spanish public following his transfer to Real Madrid.

"Real is a bigger club than Arsenal," said Anelka, whose 37.5 million transfer deal, the second biggest in football history, with the Spanish side was signed on Wednesday.

Wearing a long electric blue jacket and accompanied by his brothers and agents Claude and Didier, Anelka also lashed out at English journalists.

"After what happened to me in England, it couldn't get worse. I had problems with the English press," said the 20-year-old striker.

Anelka, whose planned transfer to Italian side Lazio fell down because of his personal demands, insisted money did not interest him.

"I'm not concerned with the millions. I'll do my best during my time with Real Madrid so that people don't think only of the 37.5 million dollars that I cost."

"For a long time I have wanted to play in Spain. Being at Real is even better," he said.

Anelka makes his debut performance Saturday during a friendly match against Red Star of Belgrade. Real Madrid meet Mallorca for their first league game of the season on August 22.

SEA Games

Malaysia sent packing

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Aug 6: Indonesia and Singapore ground out a 1-1 draw here Friday to go through to the Southeast Asian Games football semi-finals, killing Malaysia's hopes, reports AFP.

Malaysia beat hosts Brunei 2-0 but it was not enough to get one of the two qualifying places from Group, which were taken by the Indonesians and Singapore.

The Malaysians scored a goal in each half through Bakri Asmawi and Kamaluddin Azizul. But the side, vilified as "traitors" by their press after two earlier defeats, finished the tournament on six points.

Malaysian defender Baharom Khairul Anuar, who earlier issued a formal apology for having made an obscene gesture at the Malaysian press, finished a wretched tournament by earning a yellow card.

Group rivals Indonesia and Singapore both went through on seven points each after their draw.

Singapore substitute Indra Sathian Daud, who came in on the hour, controlled Tan Kim Leng's pinpoint pass on the edge of the box with one touch and lashed a magnificent rising shot after being allowed to turn by three defenders on the 89th minute.

Indonesian captain Bima Sakti put his side in front against the run of play when he crashed a penalty in off the underside of the crossbar after forward Rochi Melkiano Edfen Putiray was pulled down in the first half.

Undefeated Thailand, who lead Group A on goal difference from Vietnam with seven points each, play their last group match against Myanmar on Sunday.

Vietnam, who face the winless Philippines, should need only show up to gain at least a point against the tournament whipping boys who have conceded 16 goals in three games. Vietnam have yet to concede a goal while scoring 11 in three games.

Thailand's English coach Peter Withe warned his champions against over-confidence.

Myanmar, on four points, are still in with a mathematical chance - provided they defeat the Thais and the Philippines score 11 goals over a Vietnamese reply.

Booter says sorry

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Aug 6: Malaysian international Khairul Anuar Baharom escaped sanctions Friday after he apologized for a moment of madness in the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games football, reports AFP.

The 25-year-old defender was reported to have made a rude gesture at the Malaysian section of the press after his side earned their first win in a SEA Games group B match against Cambodia on Wednesday.

Khairul made a formal apology released through the Malaysian delegation here.

"My action was instigated as a result of our team's win over Cambodia," he said.

"It was done unintentionally and I acted as such after being overwhelmed by the said win. I hope that my apologies will be accepted and any misunderstanding which resulted could be settled amicably."

Malaysia have been vilified by their country's press as a "disgrace" and "traitors" after losing 6-0 to Indonesia and 3-1 to Singapore in earlier group matches.

Despite the win over Cambodia, they are still close to an early return. They are three points adrift of joint group leaders Indonesia and Singapore.

They need a big win in their last group game against hosts Brunei later Friday and for Indonesia or Singapore to suffer a big defeat. If their two rivals draw in Friday's other match, both would qualify.

The Olympic Council of Malaysia said no disrepute charges will be laid against Khairul.



Marseille's Christophe Brando (No 8) and Thierry de Neef (2nd from R) of Le Havre fight for possession during their French First Division soccer clash at Le Havre on August 5. The match ended 0-0.

Marseille falter at Le Havre



PARIS, Aug 6: Would-be champions Marseille slipped up at Le Havre here on Thursday as their ill-tempered French league clash ended goalless, reports AFP.

The most action came off the ball, with both sides ending with 10 men after two mass confrontations.

Six bookings were also handed out.

The result leaves Marseille, last year's runners-up and who expected to win on Thursday, at the top of the table with four points from two matches.

Champions Bordeaux, in second on three points after one game, play at Montpellier on Saturday.

All Marseille had to show for their efforts was a first-half shot from midfielder Robert Pires which hit the post and a second-half shot from Fabrizio

Ravanelli that tested Le Havre goalkeeper Sebastien Hamel.

The final brawl, with a minute to go, saw Cyrille Pouget of Le Havre and Eduardo Berizzo of Marseille shown red cards after Pouget had lashed out at his opponent with a wild kick.

Earlier, Marseille striker Christophe Dugary sparked another row between the teams after elbowing a defender and was swiftly substituted by manager Roland Courbis after the incident.

Meanwhile Tony Vairelles showed why ambitious Lyon swooped for him in the close season as he engineered their 2-1 win at newly-promoted Troyes.

The former Lens striker scored with two headers, the first in the 15th minute and the second, a fine diving effort, in the 52nd. He now has three goals in his first two games.

Brazilian Sonny Anderson,

another of Lyon's expensive new recruits, was left with little to do but applaud his strike partner.

The rest of France's teams go into action on Friday and Saturday.

French league table on Thursday

	P	W	D	L	G	A	P
Marseille	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Bordeaux	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Auxerre	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Montpellier	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Nantes	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Paris SG	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Strasbourg	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Lyon	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Saint-Etienne	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Monaco	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Metz	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Reims	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Le Havre	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Bastia	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Nancy	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Lens	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Troyes	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Sedan	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Hearts plan to cash in



GLASGOW, Aug 6: Hearts, fresh from a thumping 4-1 win at St Johnstone in their opening game of the season, will be hoping to take advantage of Rangers' Champions' League distractions when they host Dick Advocaat's side in the Scottish Premier League on Saturday.

Rangers are preparing for a two-legged shootout with crack Italian outfit Parma which could make or break their season, even if it is still only August.

Parma visit Ibrox for the first leg of the third qualifying round clash on Wednesday and Finnish striker Jonatan Johansson believes Rangers' hopes of being bracketed among Europe's elite hinges on the tie.

"The main thing is that we do something at Ibrox so we have a chance in the second leg," said Johansson, who

scored in both legs of Rangers' comfortable 7-1 second qualifying round aggregate win over FC Haka.

"They are clearly one of the best sides in Europe having won the UEFA Cup, but we'll relish the challenge of playing them again. They're a massive name and the whole place will be buzzing."

"A place in the Champions League is a huge prize for both teams and we know it will be tough, but we have to be positive."

Parma held Rangers to a 1-1 draw in last season's UEFA Cup third round first leg before the Serie A club clinched a less-than-convincing 3-1 success on home soil.

Advocaat, whose team were unconvincing in winning their first league match against Kilmarnock 2-1 last week, will therefore be keen to avoid a morale-sapping defeat at Tynecastle against Hearts.

Rangers main injury doubt is Dutchman Arthur Numan, who has a hamstring problem. But both Neil McCann and American Claudio Reyna expected to be fit.

John Barnes' Celtic were in sumptuous form last Sunday as they romped to a 5-0 opening win at Aberdeen and St Johnstone, still sore from their Hearts defeat, will be fearing the worst as they travel to Celtic Park in the other game of note on Saturday.

FIXTURES

Saturday (kick-offs 1400GMT): Celtic v St Johnstone, Hearts v Rangers, Kilmarnock v Aberdeen, Motherwell v Dundee Utd.

Sunday (1705 GMT): Dundee v Hibernian

Gunners want 'Good boy' Suker



LONDON, Aug 6 (AFP): With the memories of troubled French striker Nicolas Anelka fresh in the club's memory, Arsenal have given Davor Suker, their new 5 million dollar Croatian striker a year to prove that his "problem-boy" tag is unfounded.

The 31-year-old hitman signed a two-year deal and accepted a substantial cut in wages when he signed for the Gunners from Real Madrid earlier this week.

But he arrives in London with the reputation of a temperamental star who is difficult to handle, and Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, having suffered the infamous Anelka episode, is clearly taking no chances this time.

He has ordered that his new signing's situation at Highbury will be reviewed next summer.

A clause to that effect has been inserted in Suker's contract and Wenger said: "If it is clear after a year that it has not worked out between Davor and the club then he can leave."

Wenger added: "We have put that clause in his contract and he didn't argue about it at all. That was a big factor in my decision to sign him."

The fact that he has accepted it shows he has the character to take on a big challenge. I admire him for that and there is no doubting he is a very good performer."

The 31-year-old Suker grabbed six goals and the Golden Boot for finishing top scorer at World Cup 98 where he spearheaded Croatia's surprise march into the semi-finals - and third place.

He is his country's top scorer with 39 goals in 47 internationals and after winning the Primera Liga with Real Madrid in 1997, he was part of their squad which won the European Cup a year later, coming on as a substitute in the final against

Juventus in Amsterdam.

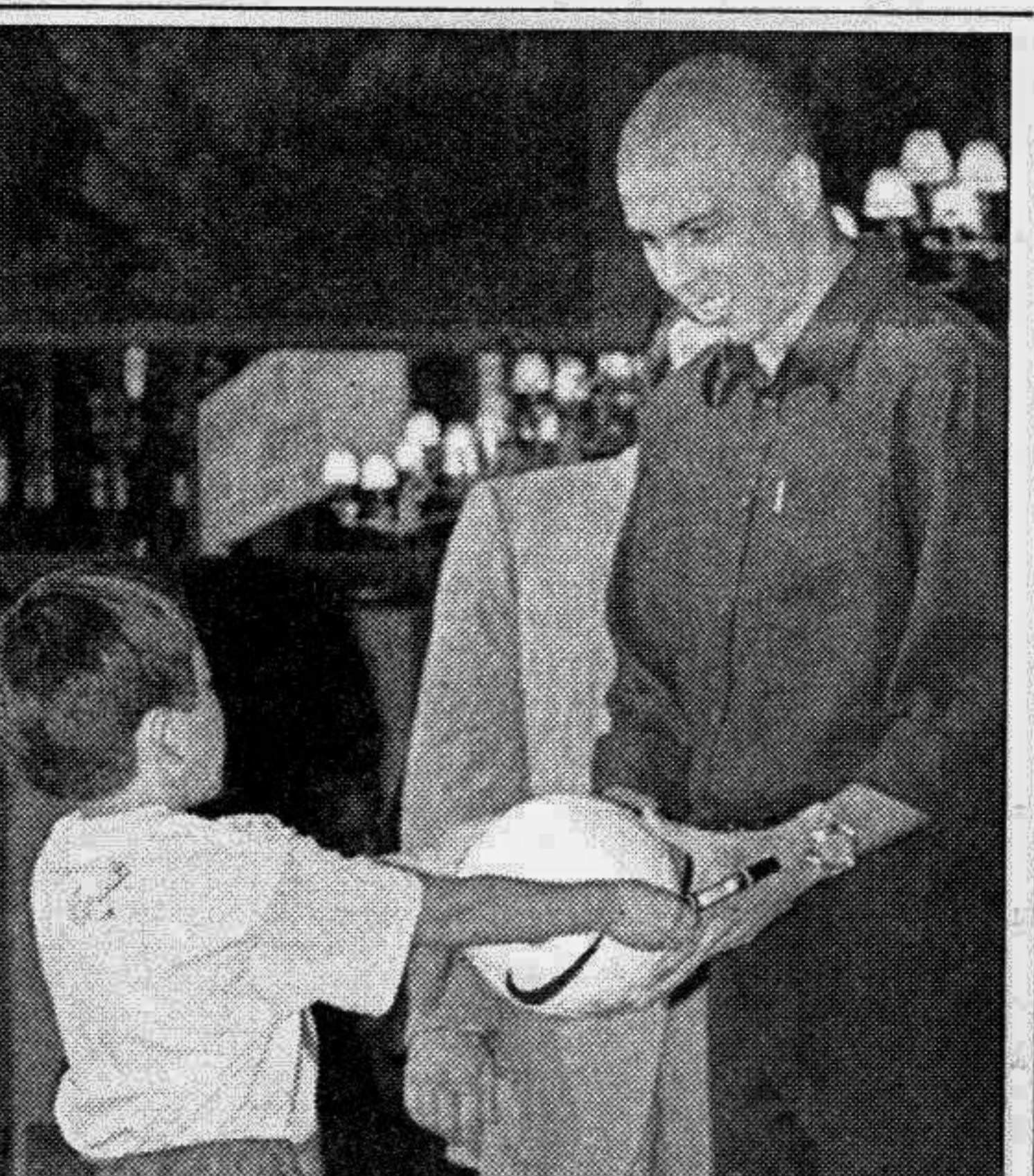
But he fell out with Real's new coach John Toshack last season and Wales star banned him from the first-team squad after alleging that Suker often failed to turn up for training and invariably showed a bad attitude when he did.

Suker said: "I have no comment to make about Toshack but there were other players who didn't enjoy their time at

Real last season, not just me.

"Now I just want to work hard and show my ability for another historic club like Arsenal. I aim to score many goals and win many cups."

Fulham, West Ham and Tottenham all turned down the chance to sign him earlier this year and Spurs boss George Graham reveals Suker was also offered to him at Leeds. Graham said: "We didn't take him but it wasn't because of his age."



Brazilian superstar Ronaldo obliges a young autograph seeker during a press conference at a Tokyo hotel yesterday. It was held to launch Montega Geneva's limited edition 'R9 Chronograph' watch. Ronaldo has endorsed it with the initial of his name and shirt number. — AFP photo

British Open chess

Gormally alone atop

SCARBOROUGH, England, Aug 6: Indian Grand Master Pravin Thipsay played a powerful attacking game to outwit International Master (IM) Nicholas Port of England to share the second spot after the fourth round of the British Open chess championships here, reports FTI.

England IM D Gormally stunned third-seeded compatriot GM I Emms yesterday to jump into solo lead with 4 points while other overnight leaders GM B Lalie and P Wells drew their game and were sharing the second spot with Thipsay, J Rowson, C Werd and I Hodgson with 3.55 points.

Thipsay adopted his pet advance variation with white pieces against the French defence of port (below rating 2425). The Englishman was slowly put on the defensive as Thipsay methodically improved his space advantage.

Thipsay's major pieces crashed through on the F and C files to checkmate black's king, which was caught in the centre. It was a well played game by the Indian GM.

Among the other Indians in fray, former national champion Abhijit Kunte suffered a reverse in his quest for the final norm for the Grandmaster title, when he went down fighting to top seed GM Julian Bodgson of England while IM V Saravanan held another English GM Stuart conquest in a game of fluctuating fortunes.

Youngster Sundararajan Kidambi and IWM Anupama Gokhale could not keep up with their pace from the initial rounds and went down fighting to Swiss GM Callagher and FM C Duncan of England respectively.

Sino paddlers win mixed doubles

EINDHOVEN, Netherlands, Aug 6: China's Ma Lin and Zhang Yingling lifted the mixed doubles title at the 45th World Table Tennis Championships here Friday, reports AFP.

Ma and Zhang beat compatriots Feng Zhe and Sun Jin 21-15, 21-19, 21-15 to clinch the first crown of the tournament.

China had dominated the event with all eight quarterfinal pairings being Chinese.

Ma and Zhang had earlier defeated Wang Liqin and Wang Nan to set up their final date with Feng and Sun, who had overcome Qin Zhiqian and Yang Ying in their semifinal.

The eventual winners took charge of the final, winning the first two sets before briefly losing concentration and yielding the third set.

Agassi reaches quarterfinals

MONTREAL, Aug 6: Andre Agassi and Todd Martin won two matches here Thursday to reach the ATP du Maurier Open quarterfinals, joining top seed Pat Rafter of Australia at the 2.45 million-dollar event, reports AFP.

Rain pushed three second round matches to Thursday morning, but Agassi came through by downing two American compatriots, Richey Reneberg first by 6-7, 6-0, 6-3 and Michael Chang next by 6-2, 7-5.

Agassi stretched his career edge to 13-7 in his rivalry with Chang, who has struggled of late and followed Agassi's path to rebuilding his career by playing Challenger events to tune up for the hardcourt season.

Agassi improved to 28-5 at the tournament and has won 19 of his past 21 matches, including the French Open title. His losses were to Pete Sampras in the finals at Wimbledon and Los Angeles.

Martin also won two, the sixth seed American beating Italy's Laurence Tielemans 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 and then compatriot Vince Spadea 6-3, 7-6.

But eighth seed Tommy Haas lost his second match of the day to Swede Nicolas Pietrangeli 6-3, 7-6.

Rafter, defending his crown here, ousted Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic 6-3, 6-4.

Third seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia and American Jim Courier also locked up quarterfinal spots by defeating South Africans.

Kafelnikov, the reigning Australian Open champion, defeated qualifier Kevin Ullyett, 6-4, 7-6. Courier outlasted 1996 champion Wayne Ferreira 6-7, 6-4, 7-5 to post his 495th career match triumph.

France's Fabrice Santoro also reached the quarterfinals with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Ramon Delgado of Paraguay.

Rafter has put together an impressive 25-5 record since the beginning of May after winning only seven of his first 15 matches this season. He became the No. 1 player in the world last week, but lost the top spot to Sampras while taking a week off to practice at his home in Bermuda.

Cuban boxers dominate

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, Aug 6: Cuba's dominance of the Pan American Games boxing continued yesterday as four more of their fighters won semifinal bouts, reports Reuters.

Thursday's victories mean that Cuba will be represented in nine of the 12 boxing finals which begin today.

Other contenders for boxing gold include the Canadians, four boxers from the United States, two each from Argentina and Brazil and one apiece from Venezuela and Mexico.

Waldner bears Euro hopes



EINDHOVEN, Netherlands, Aug 6 (AFP): Reigning world champion Jan Ove Waldner and his fellow Europeans were preparing to batten down the hatches Friday in the face of the Chinese tornado which threatens to take the 45th World Table Tennis Championships by storm.

With the Chinese women wreaking complete devastation - only two non-Chinese players survived through to the quarter-finals to be played early Friday evening - only the men look

by the skin of his teeth at the last eight stage - his Swedish compatriot Jorgen Persson, himself a former world champion also staggered through - but both men found themselves in the eye of the storm ahead of Friday's last eight clashes with China's leading contenders.

Waldner faces third seeded Kong Linghui, the only Chinese man to win the world title in the 1990s.

Kong triumphed in 1995 but Waldner took the title back west two years ago in Manchester and China's stated mission this time around is to win back the

parity has been the hallmark of Chinese success so far even if only one name will adorn the trophy Sunday evening if they succeed in their quest for that holy grail.

Kong had only dropped one set so far in his four matches but 1992 Olympic champion Waldner is his toughest opponent yet and the Chinese player has only won two of their eight encounters.

But the 33-year-old Swede is in the twilight of his career and will have to be at his best to deny Kong. Waldner has dropped four sets so far and was pushed to the limit in his last 16 match by France's Christophe Legout in a marathon five-setter.

Persson, seeded eight, faces the top surviving seed Liu Guoliang, ranked two and the reigning Olympic champion.

That clash seems heavily weighted in favour of Liu, who has won all four matches between the players.

However, the Chinese player faltered slightly in both his games Thursday conceding a set to England's Matthew Syed in the third round and having to save three set points to avoid a two-set deficit against France's 1993 world champion Jean-Philippe Gatin.

Liu came back to see off the Frenchman.

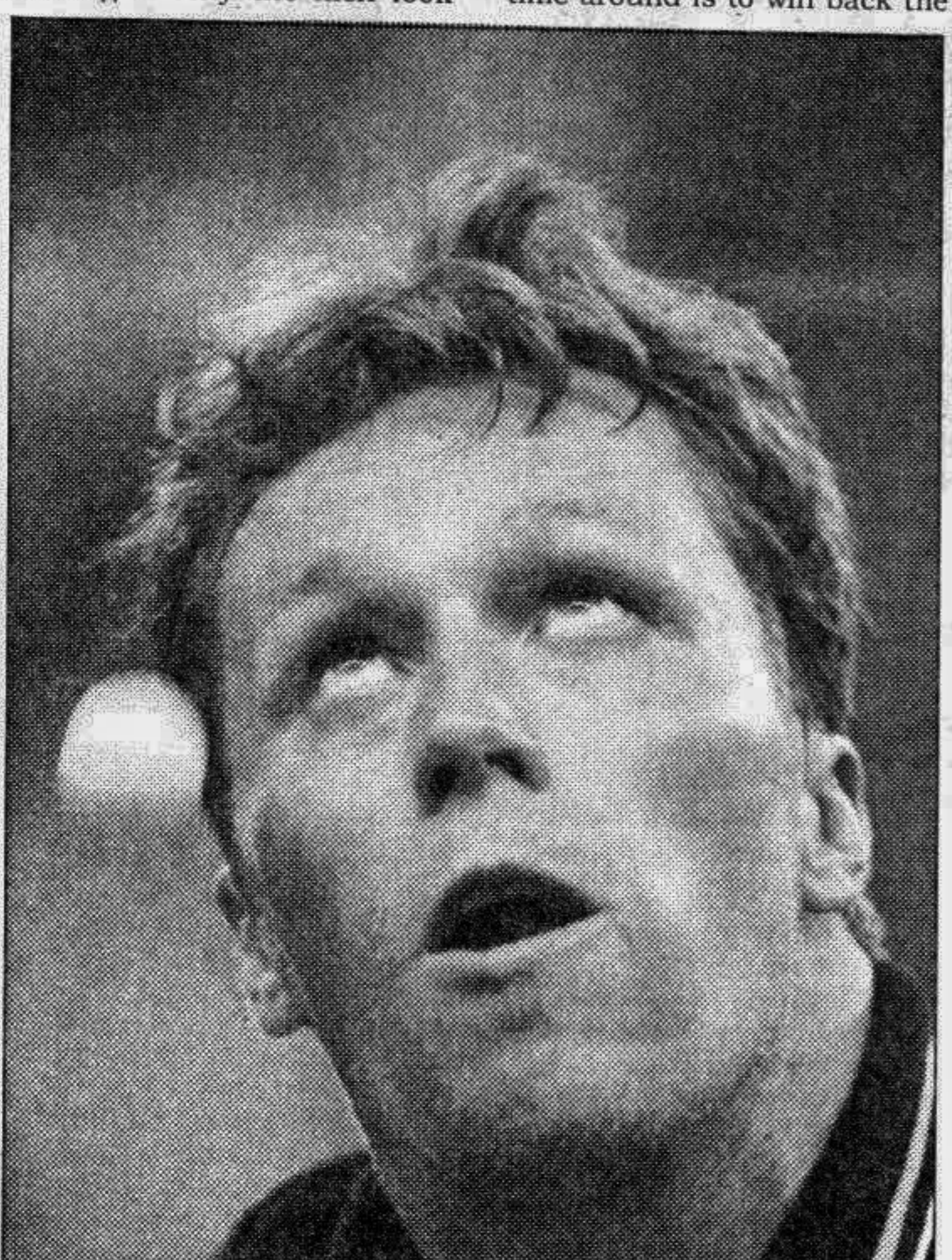
At least one European is assured of a place in the last four with fourth seeded Croat Zoran Primorac due to tackle Austria's Werner Schlager, ranked 15.

Primorac was at the centre of a minor drama Friday when he found out that his lucky shirt had not been washed and was engaged in a dash to ensure it was ready for his Friday night encounter.

The other men's quarterfinal pits China's Ma Lin, conqueror of Belarusian top seed Vladimir Samsonov in the previous round, against South Korean Kim Taek-Soo.

In the women's event top seed Wang Nan was expected to continue her 100 per cent record against compatriot Cheng Hongxia in her last eight match while second seed Li Ju defends a similarly unblemished record against Zhang Yining.

The revelation of this tournament Li Nan tackles Sun Jin while Europe's last remaining hope - Germany's Jing Tian Zorner - herself Chinese born - squares up to the other surviving non-Chinese player Ryu Ji Hye of Korea.



Defending titlist Jan Ove Waldner is about to serve into his men's singles match against France's Christophe Legout at the World Table Tennis Championships in Eindhoven on August 5.

capable of withstanding the trail of destruction but -- on Thursday night -- the roof looked like it might fall in on them too.

Fifth seed Waldner survived

men's crown.

In theory this is an individual tournament -- the team World Championships take place in Kuala Lumpur next February -- but collective soli-

Hingis storms into semis



CARLSBAD, California, Aug 6: Second-seeded Swiss teen Martina Hingis overcame Belgium's Dominique van Roost 6-2, 6-4, here Thursday, reaching the semifinals of a 520,000-dollar TIG Classic, reports AFP.

In her first tournament since crashing out of Wimbledon in the first round and losing the French Open final, Hingis used superior serving and consistency to defeat Van Roost, who forced spirited baseline rallies.

"I played very well and was focussed from the beginning,"

said Hingis. "I was serving very well and could focus on that, believing that I could win those (service) games easily. That was a big help."

"My groundstrokes also were better than in my first match. I've picked up my game a little bit more and believe again. I didn't know how I was going to do here, and it feels good being in the last four again. The confidence and belief that I can do it again is growing match by match."

Hingis gained an early break in the first set, taking a 2-1 lead when a defensive lob from Van Roost landed long.

Pressure from a baseline rally then forced Van Roost to net a backhand to concede her next service game, and although Van Roost saved a set point at 1-5 Hingis was able to serve out safely for the set.

Hingis though had to dig deep to gain the upper hand in the second set. Failing to convert two break points in the opening game, Hingis finally broke through on her fourth break point and led 3-2 when Van Roost sent an overhead wide.

That proved to be the only break of the set, but it was enough to give Hingis a welcome victory as she tries to rebuild her confidence after her traumatic French Open and Wimbledon campaigns.

In a tough two-hour baseline battle, German qualifier Anke Huber swept the last four games to claim a 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Barbara Schett of Austria. She next faces top seed and defending champion Lindsay Davenport in a quarterfinal.

"She was getting better and better during the match and getting her rhythm," said Schett. "She was hitting hard and I was always on the defensive, and she was running well and put me under a lot of pressure."



Maria Vento of Venezuela makes a backhand return during her Pan Am Games tennis final against Tara Snyder of the United States on August 5. She clinched gold with a 7-6, 6-1 victory.

— AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	36 Gary Cooper role	DOWN	19 One of Louis's girls
1 Simoleons	37 Lab activity	1 Pull an all-nighter	21 Cacophony
5 Weep loudly	40 Freeway egress	2 Emanation	23 Derby locale
12 Boast	41 Feudal servant	3 Bridge coup	24 Requisite
13 Prompt	45 Nest component	4 Recluses	25 Reveille's opposite