

### Ronaldo in love again?

HONG KONG, Aug 8: Brazilian soccer superstar Ronaldo dodged questions Sunday about the new blonde in his life, whom he has taken on a tour to Tokyo and Hong Kong, reports AFP.

But Milene Domingues took so much the attention away from Ronaldo at a press conference in Hong Kong that organisers had to ask photographers to show some restraint.

"Have some respect," pleaded compere Nat Chan to the dozens of photographers surrounding Domingues. They had been invited to snap the footballer promoting a new watch.

Ronaldo admitted in June he was going through a difficult time in his private life and confirmed his three-year relationship with Rio de Janeiro model Susana Werner was over.

But he was all smiles again as he watched Domingues sit with his father at the press conference, though neither he nor his entourage would answer questions about her.

Ronaldo has been in Tokyo and Hong Kong to promote a new watch, called the "R9" after him, that will cost between 3,000 and 34,000 US dollars.

Some of the profits will go to a new foundation Ronaldo is helping set up to provide sporting facilities for poverty-stricken youths in the shanty towns of Rio de Janeiro.

### Brazilian booter fails dope test

RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug 8: Brazilian footballer Adriano Barbosa da Silva has been banned after failing a drug test, it was reported here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Barbosa da Silva, who plays for the first division side Vasco de Gama, tested positive for the stimulant efedrine on July 25, before his team's league match against rivals Corinthians.

The substance is on the list of substances banned by the Brazilian Football Federation (CBF) and Barbosa da Silva was suspended immediately.

His club are claiming that traces of the drug were the result of ointment used during massaging.

### Referee gets on Gullit's nerve

LONDON, Aug 8: Newcastle United manager Ruud Gullit tore into referee Uriah Rennie after England captain Alan Shearer was sent off for the first time in his career during the 1-0 home defeat by Aston Villa on the opening day of the Premiership season, reports AFP.

Shearer, playing his 100th match for Newcastle, was dismissed 19 minutes from time for his second bookable offence, both for unsporting behaviour.

Newcastle's 10 men conceded the only goal of the game four minutes later when Julian Joachim headed past Steve Harper to clinch the points.

But Gullit, who has over 100 six players also go into the book, did not pull any punches as he warned that referees could destroy the English game.

"I've never seen a referee being sent such an influence as I've seen today, never ever in my whole career."

"I think the referee has to be somebody who guides the game and not be a major part of the game. Today he was a major part of the game and he destroyed it. I blame him for that, I blame him for the fact that he lost this game."

"You can fine me whatever you want. I'm right and I know that I'm right. He can report me, whatever he likes. It does not make any difference," said the furious Dutchman.

### SEA Games Thais, Indonesians shine

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Brunei, Aug 8: Thai men finished 1-2 in the prestigious 100-metre dash Sunday, while karate stylist helped Indonesian build an early lead in the Southeast Asian Games overall gold medal race, reports AP.

Meanwhile, a 32-year-old Filipino mother kept alive a 16-year unbeaten string in SEA Games long jump competition. With a leap of 6.34 metres, Elma Muros-Posadas was 7 centimetres better than Vietnam's Nguyen Bich Van and Philippine compatriot Lerma Elmira Ebluitan as she captured her eighth SEA Games gold in the event.

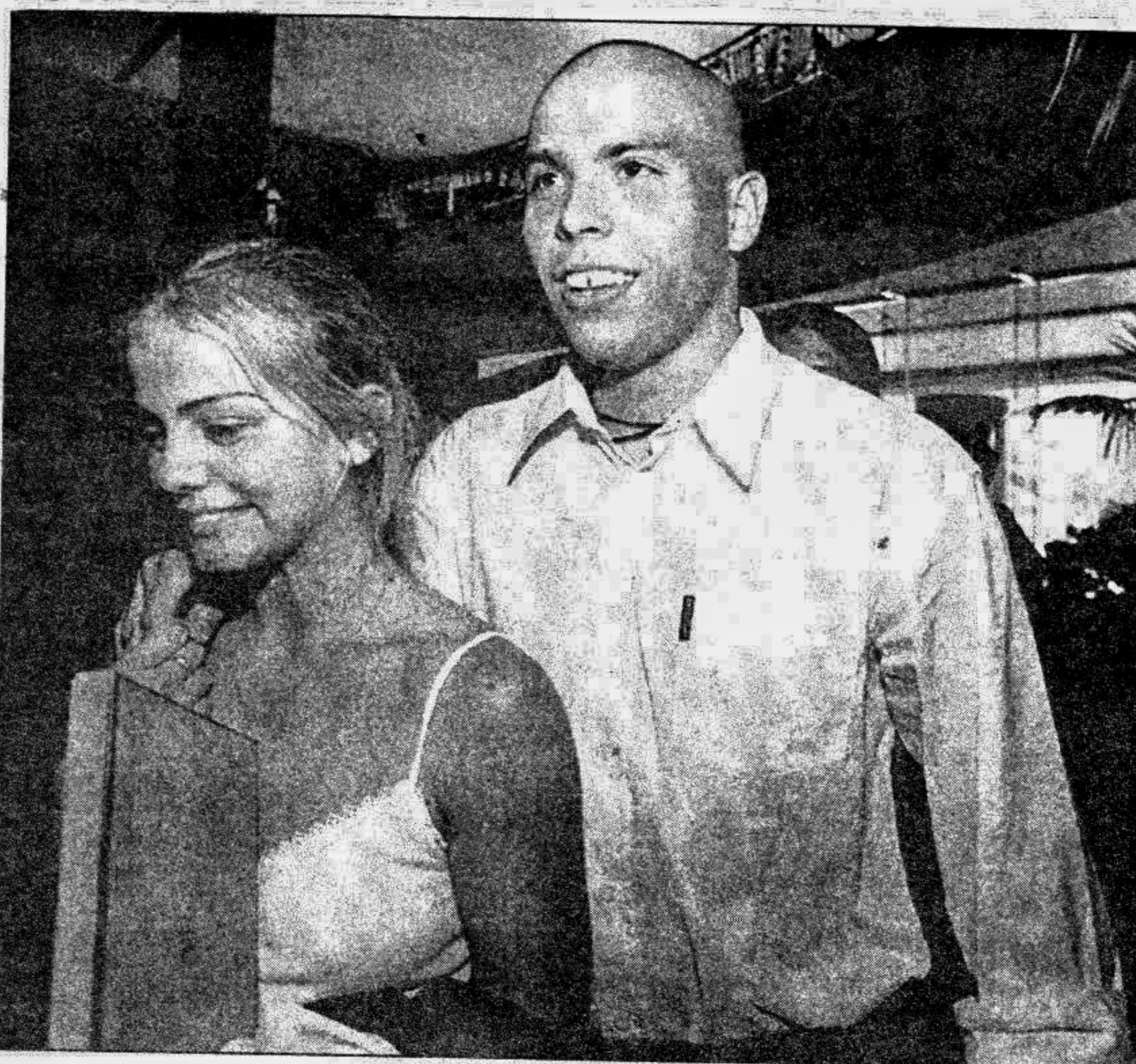
Laos won its first SEA Games gold ever when Vilasone Pikhakham knocked out Vietnam's Trong Sinh Doan in men's welterweight taekwondo. The Laotians did not even manage a silver medal at the last games in 1997.

Thailand's RENCHAI See-harung claimed honours as the region's fastest man by winning the 100 metres in 10.26 seconds, 13 ahead of teammate Vissanu Sophanich. Malaysia's Watson Nyambeck took the bronze in 10.45.

In the women's 100, Indonesia's Irene Joseph won in 11.56-.05 and .19 ahead of Thai runners Trecia Robert and Supavadee Khawpeg.

Hers was one of eight Indonesian gold medals in early events Sunday. Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines trailed with three each.

Indonesia's Supriati Sutono had little competition to worry her in the women's 5,000 meters. Thailand's Viratwan Kumputak was the only other entrant, and Supriati beat her by more than 42 seconds with a time of 17 minutes, 12.98 seconds.



Ronaldo and his girlfriend Milene Domingues arriving at their hotel in Hong Kong yesterday.

### Robert shines for PSG

PARIS, Aug 8: A double strike by Laurent Robert inspired Paris Saint Germain to a 3-1 win over Rennes on Saturday and lifted the under-performing big spenders to top of the French league, reports AFP.

PSG, whose spending power has not been reflected by title success having last won it back in 1994, lead Nantes, who beat Saint Etienne 2-0 on Friday, on goals scored after two matches - both having the maximum six points.

Elsewhere Robert's former club Montpellier had champions Bordeaux reeling after going two goals up but had to settle for a 2-2 draw and Metz thrashed Auxerre 3-0 with former Newcastle striker Louis Saha grabbing the third.

Rennes, coached by former PSG defender Paul Le Guen, had levelled the match at 1-1 when PSG's erratic keeper Bernard Lama came for a corner but missed the ball by a mile leaving Rennes' defender Lamine Diatta to head home into an empty net.

However, PSG scored twice in the second-half, a retaken penalty by the equally erratic Mickael Madar, and a cracking curling shot by 24-year-old Robert from the edge of the box in the last minute rounded it off.

Bordeaux produced a battling performance after Montpellier's storming start which featured former French international striker Patrick Loko scoring for the second successive match.

However, Montpellier could not hold it together and Bordeaux levelled the match with two half-an-hour remaining as two of their title winning heroes of last season Johan Micoud and Sylvain Wilford got on the score sheet.

Micoud headed home unmarked from a corner in the first-half and then Wilford slotted home also unmarked from the edge of the box after a superb pass by strike partner Lilliane Laslandes.

On Friday Olivier Monterrubio and Antoine Siberski scored the goals in Nantes' 2-0 win at newly promoted St Etienne.

Monterrubio fired home a well-directed shot in the 35th minute on a rain-soaked night and Siberski stabbed home a last-minute insurance goal from close range to give Nantes two wins out of two.

In other matches played Friday night, former champions Lens edged Monaco 1-0, promoted Sedan downed Nancy 3-1 and Bastia trounced Strasbourg 3-0.

Daniel Moreira rounded off a superb flowing move by firing home a crashing right-foot shot past French national team goalkeeper Fabien Barthez five minutes before half-time to give Lens their win over Monaco.

who have gleaned just one point from their opening two matches.

A Laurent Casanova header put Bastia on their way against Strasbourg and the Corsicans then got further strikes from Dane Dan Petersen and Frederic Nee.

Sedan bounced back impressively from their opening loss to Marseille with goals from Pierre Debloek, Cedric Monnet and Olivier Quint before Irish international Tony Casciaro grabbed a consolation goal for outgunned Nancy.

In matches played on Thursday night, Lyon won 2-1 at newly-promoted Troyes while perennial strugglers Le Havre held last year's runners-up Marseille to a 0-0 draw.

Botha-Briggs bout ends in a draw ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey, Aug 8: A tale of two bouts ended up in a majority decision draw between heavyweights Francois Botha and Shannon Briggs in a 10-round non-title fight, reports AP.

Briggs' early control Saturday gave way to Botha's rally in the second half of the bout. The fight ended with Botha hammering Briggs relentlessly while Briggs braved an ugly rash above his right eye and gave up his left ear. Briggs may have saved himself by scoring a sudden eighth-round knockdown late in a round Botha had dominated.

Two judges scored it 94-94 and a third had it 95-92 in Botha's favour. The Associated Press scored it 94-94. All three judges awarded Botha 10-8 round in the 10th.

Briggs weighed 230 pounds (103.5 kilograms) for the bout in front of 5,150 at the Trump Taj Mahal. Botha weighed 232 pounds (104.4 kilograms). Each will get dir\$ 400,000 for the fight.

Briggs (31-2-1) had a 7-inch (17.8-centimeter) reach advantage and controlled the early rounds with a stiff jab. Botha (39-2-1) struggled in the first two rounds, missing wildly over the top with counter right hands before finding the range with it during the third round.

Botha, 30, tested Briggs chin often, but spent much of the fight waiting for Briggs to make a mistake and rarely was able to find combinations until the end.

It was Botha's first bout since Jan. 16, when he was knocked out by Mike Tyson in the fifth round of a fight he was leading.

Briggs, 27, whose only fight since losing to WBC champion Lennox Lewis last year was a first-round TKO over Marcus Rhode last December, went into the fight as a 3-1 favourite, according to Las Vegas oddsmakers.

Briggs returned to the site of his most memorable bouts. He suffered his first career loss in shocking fashion against Darroll Wilson in 1996, won a stunning upset decision over George Foreman in 1997 and waged his battle with Lewis in 1998.

Botha, who has fought in South Africa, Germany and Las Vegas, made his Atlantic City debut. He won the IBF crown with a decision over Axel Schulz in 1995, but was stripped of it when a post-fight examination revealed the presence of steroids.



Robert and his girlfriend Milene Domingues arriving at their hotel in Hong Kong yesterday.

### Yevgeny, Thomas in final

MONTREAL, Aug 8: Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia upset American Andre Agassi 6-1, 6-4 with an inspired display of all-round tennis in the semifinals of the du Maurier Open on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Right from the start it was clear the second-seeded Agassi wouldn't be blasting the third-seeded Kafelnikov off the court, as he had done with most opponents while compiling a 20-2 record dating back to the start of the French Open.

Kafelnikov effectively countered Agassi's trademark groundstroke barrage and had the veteran American on his heels with bold shotmaking of his own. The fourth-ranked Russian ended up with 22 winners to 18 for the third-ranked Agassi.

Kafelnikov will now meet 11th-seeded Thomas Johansson of Sweden in today's final. Johansson defeated ninth-seeded Nicolas Pietrangeli of Germany 4-6, 6-1, 6-3 to reach the most important final of his five-year pro career.

The 2.45 million dollars du Maurier Open is one of the ATP Tour's elite Super 9 events.

Kafelnikov, the 1996 French Open and 1999 Australian Open champion, has been in three previous Super 9 finals and is still looking for his first success. He had a crashing head by the Swede has won the last two matches, at the 1998 US Open and at the London indoor event in February.

Asked if he had ever seen Kafelnikov play that well, Agassi answered: "Not from the best seat in the house, from the other side of the net. It was quite good."

"Even though I wasn't incredibly sharp, I felt he was on the ball and hitting his returns hard. He was on top of every aspect of his game."

"I had to come out and show Andre right from the first point that it wasn't going to be easy for him," said Kafelnikov, who now leads their head-to-head meetings 4-2.

"I haven't performed that well since the Australian Open. I wasn't prepared for the clay-court season in the spring and basically I knew I would hate it. I just wanted to get back to my surface (hard courts)."

After Kiefer won the first set, the 22-year-old German seemed to pay for the energy he spent defeating top seed Patrick Rafter of Australia 6-4, 6-7, 7-6 in two hours, 43 minutes on Friday night.

The tiebreak was obvious in his energy level, which was reflected in their winners totals. The 17th-ranked Kiefer had 11 in the first set but only one in the second and three in the third. Johansson, ranked 22nd, was more consistent with 11, 8 and 12.

"I had the early match yesterday (finished by 1 pm on Friday)," Johansson, 24, said. "He was playing and I was at the hotel watching on TV, I could see that he was a little tired in the third set."

China's Mia Lin celebrates the downfall of veteran Swedish table tennis star Jan-Ove Waldner in the semifinals yesterday.

Rest of the World side and China would still be in a league of their own.

All that remained Sunday afternoon was to see whether Liu Guoliang or Ma Lin would be the new men's champion while the women's doubles event would pit Wang Nan and Li Ju against Yang Ying and Sun Jin.

Wang is the new woman's singles champion, replacing retired legend Deng Yaping, while Ma and Zhang Yingying took the mixed doubles Friday.

Liu and Kong Linghui, the Olympic champions, were crowned men's doubles kings on Saturday.

Victory in the men's singles has been something of an obsession for China during the 1990s, with four of the five previous titles going to European men.

Before the tournament Chinese officials admitted that the principal mission was to win the men's title back.

But run later Sunday Europe's leading men admitted those days were over.

Reigning World Champion Jan-Ove Waldner bowed out at the semi-final stage after China's Ma Lin came from two sets down to pull off a remarkable comeback win.

The 33-year-old said he was still enjoying the game and was looking forward to next year's European Championships in Bremen and the Sydney Olympics.

Most European hopes had rested with Waldner, seeded fifth, who took the first two sets 21-18, 21-14 before edging ahead of Ma in the third.

But ninth seeded Ma seemed to find an extra gear and began to outplay Waldner, who at 33 had two world titles and one Olympic gold medal to his name.

Waldner briefly led in the deciding rubber but Ma, conquer of Belarusian top seed Vladimir Samsonov, ran out 18-21, 14-21, 21-19, 21-19, 21-17 winner.

The other European semi-finalist Werner Schlager, seeded 15, admitted he was also comprehensively outplayed by Liu.

His cause had not been helped by a bizarre injury sustained in his hotel by a fellow guest, who trod on his foot by mistake.

Despite the Eindhoven crowd doing their best to back the two Europeans Waldner and Schlager had to concede defeat.

Some Dutch fans, naturally backing the Europeans, emulated the Chinese contingent - by using upturned litter bins as improvised drums with empty bottles as drumsticks in a bid to compete with the Far Easterners who were using more traditional methods of percussion.



Mickael Madar and cracking curling shot by 24-year-old Robert from the edge of the box in the last minute rounded it off.

### China simply invincible

EINDHOVEN, Netherlands, Aug 8: China will leave the 45th World Table Tennis Champi onships with all five gold and five silver medals on offer here after an awesome display of team spirit and strength in depth, reports AFP.

The team event will be played in Kuala Lumpur in February but - on this evidence - the International Table Tennis Federation could put all other 182 member countries into one

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### Hingis reclaims her spot

CARLSBAD, California, Aug 8: Martina Hingis climbed back to the top of the world rankings by crushing Amanda Coetzer after Venus Williams toppled defending champion Lindsay Davenport in the semifinals of the \$20,000 dollars TIG Classic yesterday, reports Reuters.

Hingis defeated Coetzer 6-1, 6-2 in 51 minutes. Williams, armed with a new forehand, beat the top-seeded Davenport 6-4, 7-5.

Hingis said she did not know that reaching the final combined with a Davenport loss would bring her back to the top when the WTA rankings are issued on Monday.

"I didn't know before the match, nobody told me," said Hingis after winning 12 of the final 13 points to improve to 6-2 over the South African. "It's exciting news for me to get the number one spot again. I didn't expect it."

"Coming into the tournament I was happy to win just the first round and then just keep going. Now I'm back on top and it feels good."

Though Hingis has won six of nine matches in her two-year rivalry with Williams, she said she expected a stern task against the 19-year-old American star.

"I think it will be an exciting match, two youngsters always," she said. "She's a very powerful player with a good serve. I just have to take my chances or I'm out of there."

When a reporter joked that she would be the underdog, Hingis joked: "I'm the underdog, yeah I like that."

Williams was pleased to get past the world number one for just the second time in 10 career meetings, though their one-hour 15-minute baseline slugfest was no work of art by either player, as the two Californians posted 52 unforced errors against 32 winners.

"I like winning against her," said Williams, who crushed 23 winners to 9 for her opponent. "I've only had two wins against her and it's only the beginning of better times."

Disappointed after her fourth consecutive straight-sets loss to Davenport in the final of the Bank of the West Classic last week, Williams added a new wrinkle to her punishing baseline game - a ferocious forehand. The change paid off for the world's fourth-ranked player.

"I learned a lot from the last match last week," Williams said. "I don't want to be picked on anymore. I don't want anyone to pick on my forehand just because it's weak, and just give

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