

Never say never to Medvedev

NEW YORK, Sept. 6 (Reuters): Andrei Medvedev may look to be a longshot against his old friend Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the fight for a quarterfinal berth at the US Open, but don't bet against him.

The unseeded Medvedev says nothing motivates him more than a side bet with his daily practice partner Kafelnikov, the third seed who is aiming for his third Grand Slam title and the world number one ranking at the open.

"We are playing for 50,000 dollars," Medvedev calculated about the difference in prize money between the round-of-16 and the quarterfinals. "But if we put 20 dollars before the match on the side, the match will be much more interesting."

Medvedev acknowledged Kafelnikov's brilliant form of late, but the Ukrainian said forget about the form charts when cash money is on the line.

"We play for money, that's all that matters between me and him when we are on the court," he said. "We can play a thousand sets for nothing, we will not get as motivated as if we play for 10 dollars. If the bet is more, which normally it is, you get even more motivated."

"We have bets every day, every single day. Sometimes I win, sometimes he wins. At the moment, I got his money. The next week, it can turn around."

Medvedev turned around his moribund career with a sensational run this spring at the French Open.

The Ukrainian, who turned 25 last week, knocked out Pete Sampras and 1997 champion Gustavo Kuerten on the way to the French final and captured the first two sets of the title match against Andre Agassi before being overtaken by the flashy American.

That rousing Roland Garros campaign appeared to revive Medvedev, whose ranking at the end of 1998 had sunk to 61, his lowest mark in eight years.

But after the French, Medvedev went back to sleep, failing to win more than one match in any tournament leading up to the Open.

"It was such a letdown after the French, I felt that my tank was empty, my spiritual tank," said Medvedev. "It was the dream for me to win the French Open. I was so close. Losing it, I had a letdown."

"Actually I was looking very much forward to playing the US Open because I knew I'd get my motivation back here."

Maybe yes, no

ROME, Sept. 6: Italian Fiona May, the former world champion long jumper, said yesterday it was 50/50 whether she would quit athletics following her controversial defeat in Seville last month, reports Reuters.

May, who was born in Britain but competes for Italy after marrying an Italian, was convinced she was denied another World Championship gold when Spaniard Nika Montalvo won with a disputed jump on her last attempt in Seville.

After winning yesterday's Grand Prix event in Rieti, Italy, May said her fellow competitors and the crowd had convinced her she was the rightful world champion.

"The crowd gave me a huge boost tonight. In my view my performance here convinces me that I'm number one," she said. "The other competitors were very supportive too."

May won the competition with her first jump. Asked whether she would compete next season she said: "I have one more competition and then I'll take a long holiday for maybe a month."

S'pore natant may lose SEA medal for doping

SINGAPORE, Sept. 6: A 13-year-old swimmer from Singapore could lose her Southeast Asian Games gold medal over a positive drug test, a news report said Monday, reports AP.

Nicollite Teo tested positive for the drug terbutaline — a stimulant banned by world swimming body FINA — because she was taking it as an asthma medication. The Straits Times newspaper quoted Teo's mother as saying:

"FINA allows traces of terbutaline in urine as long as the drug is taken as an asthma inhalant and its use is declared at the time of testing."

Teo's mother told The Straits Times that her daughter mistakenly listed the name of another asthma drug, which she had previously used, before the test.

Teo won the SEA Games women's 200-metre breaststroke with a time of 2 minutes, 36.27 seconds.

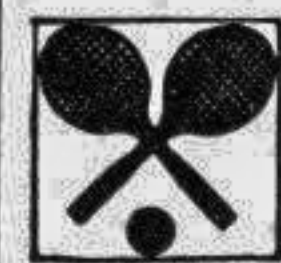
The Singapore National Olympic Council will still give Teo the reward of 10,000 Singapore dollars (US \$15,880) customarily given to all Singapore gold medalists from the games, the newspaper said.

The council has also explained the situation to SEA Games officials, who will meet in Bangkok on Wednesday to discuss Teo and two other athletes who failed drug tests at this year's games. They could decide to revoke Teo's medal.

"We have written mitigating letters to the authorities. I can assure you we have done everything we can to clarify the matter," Singapore's SEA Games chef-de-mission Tan Eng Liang told the newspaper.

The other two SEA Games athletes who failed drug tests were Vongveerananchai and Indonesian Ni Made Wahyuni, who competed in the martial art pencak silat, according to reports.

Rain bothers biggies



NEW YORK, Sept. 6: Top seed Martina Hingis overcame a long rain delay and third seed Venus Williams was aided by showers as both advanced to the US Open quarterfinals on a downpour-disrupted Sunday, reports AFP.

Rain delayed the start for two hours and 40 minutes, halted play four more times and led to Mary Joe Fernandez slipping on a slick court and hurting her right quadriceps muscle in a 2-6, 6-1, 6-0 defeat.

"That was terrible," Williams said. "At the beginning of the point, it was just a little wet. As we exchanged a few shots, it started raining much harder. Then she went down. That was unfortunate."

Australian Open champion Hingis had more trouble waiting out storms for hours than she did in beating 10th seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 6-4, 7-5, extending her win streak over the Spaniard to 12 matches.

"A long day at the office today, a lot of waiting around," Hingis said. "You don't want to get too tired. You don't know what to expect. I had lunch at 6:00 when they told us we're the night match. I had some pasta but of course you don't want to eat a huge American portion."

The Swiss teen star had a Spanish feast, ousting Sanchez-Vicario from a Grand Slam for a sixth time. Hingis has won 13 sets in a row from Sanchez-Vicario.

Williams, seeking her first Grand Slam title, raised her game after an error-filled first set. It was her first singles match in four days, after a walkover.

"I just was off. I couldn't seem to be able to get my rhythm," Williams said. "She started hitting some good shots, hitting some lines, pin-pointing shots. I had to find a way to get back in it. After two rain delays, I finally started playing better."

Fernandez said she pondered asking for a white play before the point on which she was hurt but did not want to stop after earlier delays.

"I dragged my foot on the court a little bit, saw it was slick. But once you get started, you want to play," she said. "I thought maybe it was going to stop. It was too slippery."

Williams led 2-0 in the second set when drizzle turned to rain during a point. Fernandez planted her foot in stretch for a backhand and slid.

"In the middle of the point, it just started coming down much harder," Williams said. "Before it was only a few spots. After about six or seven strokes it was pretty wet. It was in the point

when all the damage came." Play was halted a moment later, but the damage was done. Fernandez was sitting on the court holding her leg in pain as Williams grimaced.

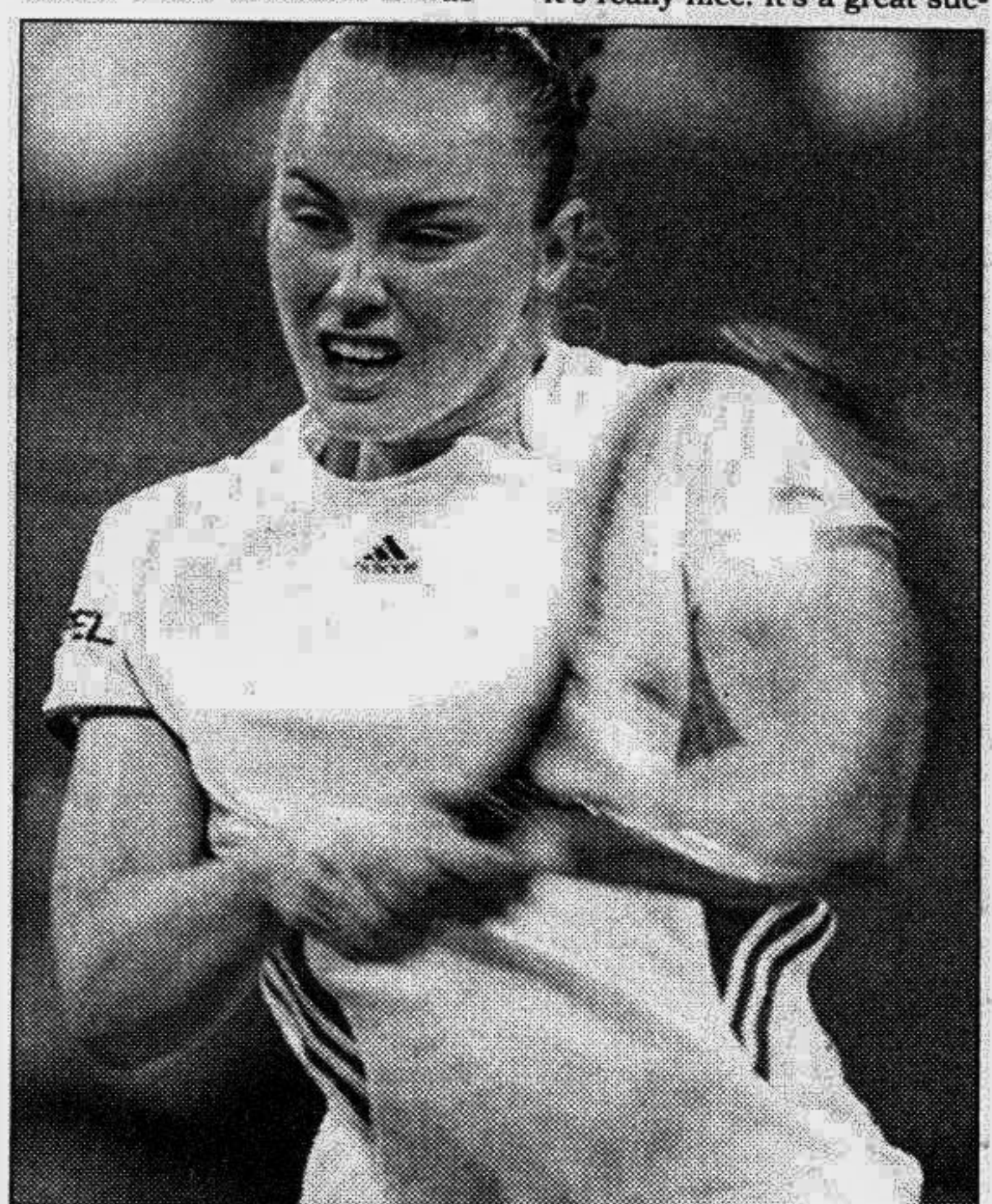
Fernandez had the sore muscle taped when play resumed. But diminished mobility against the hard-hitting Williams was too much to overcome.

"Against Venus, you have to play 100 per cent," Fernandez said. "Venus was starting to pick up the pace and play a lot better. I was tentative. It was

look back at say, 'What if? It happened. Bad luck. That's the end of it,' she said. "These things happen. If it's the worst thing that happens to me in my lifetime, I will take it."

Williams' quarterfinal foe is Austrian 12th seed Barbara Schett while Hingis plays for a semifinal berth against German Anke Huber, who dodged raindrops to oust 15th seed Amelie Mauresmo of France 6-4, 6-4, to ensure her best showing in 10 tips here.

"It feels good," Huber said. "It's really nice. It's a great success for me. I'm happy."



Women's top-ranked player Martina Hingis hitting a backhand during her match against Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario. —AFP photo

definitely in the back of my mind. Definitely with my movement, it wasn't as sharp as it was in the beginning."

While the injury turned the tide, Williams did improve her play from 18 unforced errors and three broken service games in the first set.

"I have been down before," Williams said. "I would've actually found a way to come back. The rain delays did occur. I'm sure that helped some. I don't think she made the great shots she was making in the first set."

Fernandez, who has never won a Grand Slam title, refused to ponder what might have been on a dry day.

"You can't do that. We can't

cess for me. I'm happy."

Huber, rated 27th, advanced despite a shaky effort after a rain delay came at match point.

Mauresmo saved one match point before the rain came, then returned and saved two more to hold before Huber served out the match.

"I was very tight," Huber said. "I was getting really nervous. I don't know why. I said to myself when it was raining, 'Come on, keep quiet, concentrate, take it easy.' Somehow I couldn't."

"After the game I said, 'Come on, concentrate, don't think about the three match points, just keep on playing and trying. I played it well after."

Gustavo conquers Goran



NEW YORK, Sept. 6 (AFP/AP): Fifth-seeded Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten defeated dangerous Croatian Goran Ivanisevic 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 here Sunday to reach the fourth round in his best performance ever in the US Open.

Kuerten, who has never won a hardcourt tournament, improved on his third round appearance here in 1997 — the same year he won the French Open on clay.

John McEnroe, in his role as television commentator, has said that 22-year-old Kuerten is too young to win this title, despite his French Open triumph two years ago.

Kuerten noted that he'll turn 23 on Friday, just in time for the semifinals and final.

Kuerten said he just tried to keep calm during the lengthy rain delays that frustrated players on Sunday.

"It's always boring to keep going up and down, eating and waiting, go on court, go off," he said. "I tried to relax as much as I can and keep my energy for when I went on court."

Seventh seed Todd Martin and Britain's Greg Rusedski reached a fourth-round rematch of the April Davis Cup match won by the American.

Martin advanced in 36 minutes when Sweden's 81st-ranked Magnus Larsson retired with a left knee injury after Martin won the first set 6-3.

Larsson stopped because of tendinitis in his left knee that has been hurting for several days and may have been aggravated by playing and practicing a lot on hardcourts for the past six weeks.

Ninth seed Rusedski beat American Chris Woodruff 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Kuerten set a round of 16 date with Sweden's 24th-ranked



Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten makes a sliced backhand against Goran Ivanisevic. —AFP photo

Magnus Norman in quest of his first hardcourt title.

In the evening, Frenchman Fabrice Santoro became the sixth man to exit with an injury in a match, curiously quitting

with two points to go at 6-1, 6-0, 5-1, 0-30 on his serve against Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic. Santoro blamed a sore ankle, but he walked away without a limp.

Then Agassi was to take on 52nd-ranked Frenchman Arnaud Clement, who nearly stopped him getting the title at Roland Garros.

Clement was up 5-4 in the fourth and 0-30 against the American's serve before he lost in five sets in the second round.

Agassi went on to win the title, becoming only the fifth man to complete a career Grand Slam.

"I've got revenge to take on Agassi," Clement said.

Army boxing
COMILLA, Sept. 6: The annual boxing championship of the Bangladesh Army got underway at the Comilla Cantonment yesterday, reports BSS.

Meanwhile, BAF Base Bashor beat Air Headquarters Unit 65-51.

Davis Cup Mark, Pat doubtful

SYDNEY, Sept. 6: Mark Philippoussis is almost certain to miss out and Pat Rafter has only an outside chance of playing in this month's Davis Cup tennis semifinal against Russia, Australian captain John Newcombe said today, reports AFP.

Newcombe, who has been hit by an injury crisis only weeks before his squad for the September 24-26 semifinal in Brisbane 48 hours earlier than scheduled because of the likely enforced changes.

Newcombe told Australian Associated Press in New York Philippoussis was 95 per cent certain he wouldn't recover from his knee and ankle injuries in time to play while Rafter had only a 20 per cent chance of playing as he treats a torn shoulder rotator cuff.

Rafter is receiving daily treatment in New York and wants to play in the semifinal even if he is limited to playing doubles.

"We will know more on Wednesday and Thursday," said Newcombe.

It appears likely 18-year-old Lleyton Hewitt will spearhead the team against the Russians. Australian open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Marat Safin.

Newcombe said Mark Woodford, Wayne Arthurs and Jason Stoltenberg were being appraised as potential second singles players for the tie on grass.

Arthurs is a grass court player and has had a good year, he did well at Queens, Wimbledon and Newport, but he has never played Davis Cup before. If he is picked he will be a 28-year-old rookie," he said.

Reliving a classic clash

NEW YORK, Sept. 6 (AP): Usually, the tape shows up in the wee, small hours of the morning, when insomniacs are looking for some sports footage and stumble across the match, a classic in women's tennis.

This is not some grainy black and white action of Billie Jean King and Margaret Smith Court. This is a couple of tennis teenagers in living colour, beating each other up, battling for a berth in the 1991 US Open final.

For Jennifer Capriati and Monica Seles, that memorable match, which went to a third-set tiebreaker, occurred a lifetime ago.

Monday, they try for a not-so-instant replay in the Round of 16 at the US Open.

"I've never actually seen the old match," said Seles, who prevailed that day 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7-3) and went on to win the championship.

"Everybody who comes up to me says it's one of the best matches ever played. It just will be fantastic that we get a chance again to play after so many years."

They're all grown up now. Seles at 25 and Capriati 23, both trying to put bad times behind them. So much has changed in eight years, and they both know it.

"It's a new stadium, it's a new point in our lives," Seles said. "Everything is just different."

Seles was idle for 27 months after being stabbed in 1993. Then she struggled with the illness and death of her father, who also was her coach. Capriati was out of tennis for two years with off-court problems she no longer will discuss, and played only sporadically until this season.

Asked how she has changed since that 1991 confrontation, Capriati said, "I'll talk about the tennis part. Just stronger, just a little wiser out there on the court. More than anything, just bigger and stronger, just more aggressive."

With all that she has been through, Capriati still remembers that landmark semifinal match against Seles.

"That was a very close match," she said. "I mean two points away from getting to the finals... that was just one of my best matches. It stuck with me for a long time. You know, maybe that was like a little turning point."

Capriati's career seemed in a free fall for a long time, and her comeback has stirred some admiration on the women's tour.

"She's playing with a lot more confidence than I think I've set makes a huge difference."

After the Open semi, Seles and Capriati split four more matches. Overall, Seles holds a 5-3 edge in the series.

She understands the impact that match made.

"I think it was definitely an important tennis match because she would have been in the finals," Seles said. "She had a shot at winning her first Grand Slam title. It did give me a shot to win my first US Open title."

Capriati knows she shares parallels with Seles because of the hard times both of them have experienced.

"Maybe a little bit," she said of the comparisons. "I think our lives are completely different. But just maybe that she's had to come back and I've had to come back, too."

Seles offered her own perspective on the rematch.

"I wish it was the semis already," she said. "That would be nice."

BAF b'ball
Two more matches of the BAF inter-base basketball championship were held at the BAF Base Bashor today, reports BSS.

BAF Base Zahurul Haque defeated Air Headquarters Unit 66-38.

Ngeny captures Coe's last record



RIETI, Italy, Sept. 6 (AFP/Reuters): Kenya star Noah Ngeny, who had tried and failed to break several world records this season, broke the longest standing men's track world record the 1000m here on Sunday running a time of 2min 11.96sec.

The 20-year-old, who took

1500m silver at last month's World Championships, broke Coe's mark of 2:12.18 set in October 1981 — the last record belonging to the legendary Briton.

Coe, who only ran the distance four times, twice breaking the world record, said he was surprised that the record hadn't gone before.

Nobody likes their records to go but it's been 18 years and I have been expecting it to go before now," he told BBC radio.

"Ngeny is a fantastic athlete with great credentials and judging by the fact he broke it by the equivalent of 12-13 metres it says a lot about his ability," he added.

"He looked terrific and with some pretty comprehensive pacemaking it really didn't look as if my old mark would hold," he added.

Ngeny, who had gone desperately close to breaking Coe's record in Nice back in July, was given a superb lead by Kenyan pacemaker David Kiptoo before he dropped out with 300m to go.

Coe said the race in which he set the 1,000-metre record, at the Bislett Games in Oslo in July 1981, was the perfect performance.

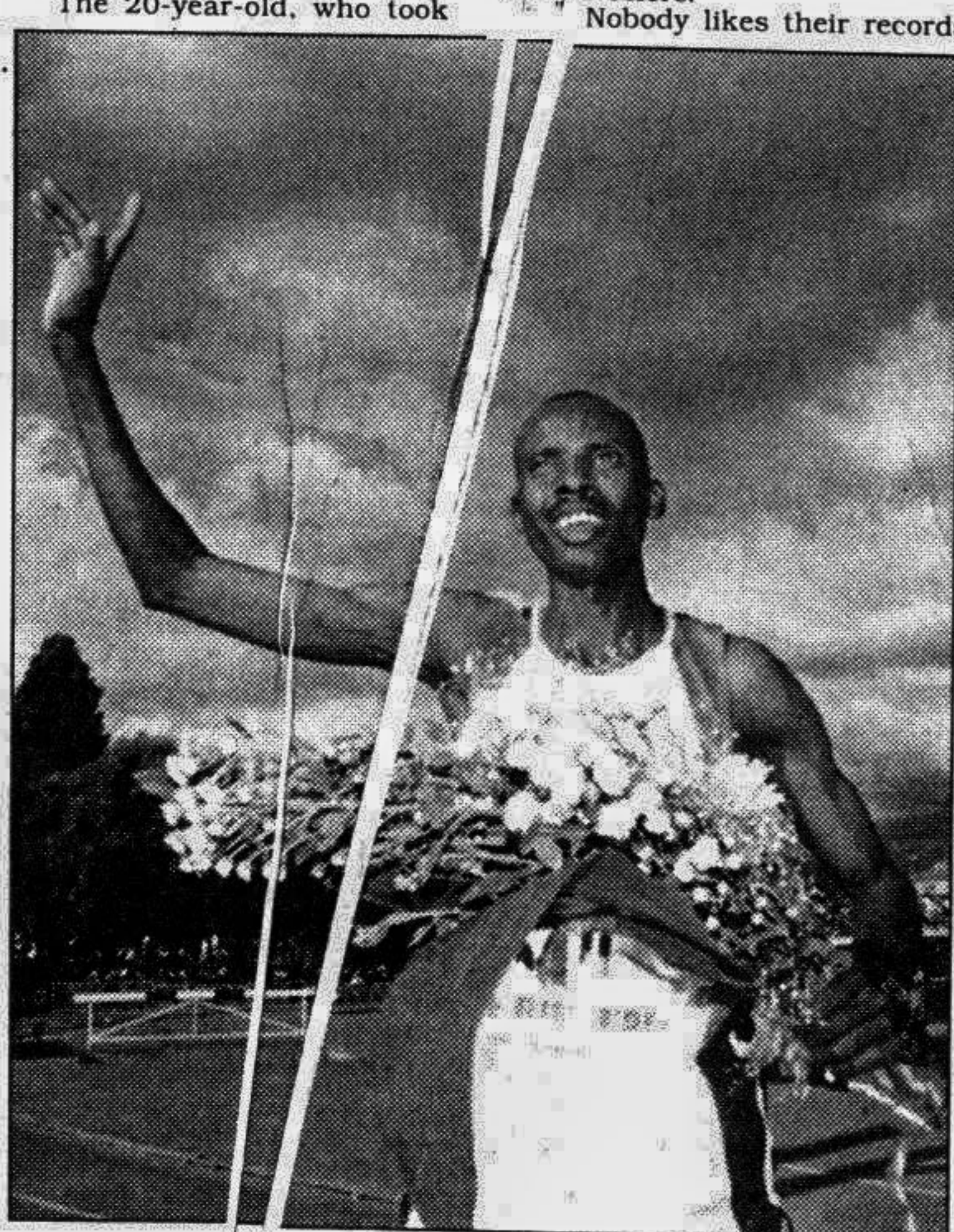
"That was the one race of my career when I knew I could not possibly have run one step faster," the double Olympic gold medalist at 1,500 metres said in 1997.

Coe also set a world record for the 800 metres in 1981, a mark that lasted until August 1997 when it was finally beaten by Wilson Kipketer.

In the summer of 1981 Coe also set a world record for the mile. He held the world record for the 1,500 metres in 1979.

Ngeny, who had failed in attempts on the 1500 and mile records held by arch-rival Hicham El Guerrouj earlier in the season, then sped away to ease inside the record with more than a two-second gap back to another Kenyan, William Yampoy who clocked 2:14.41 while Algerian Djabi Said-Guerni, who took world bronze in the 800m, was third in 2:14.52.

Ngeny's performance rounded off a remarkable 18 months in which the man, who only took up running two years ago, has gone from being a pacemaker to world silver and now a world record.



EXIT COE, ENTER NGENY: Kenya's Noah Ngeny poses after breaking British long-distance running legend Sebastian Coe's 18-year-old 1,000 metres record. —AFP photo

Golden League reaches Berlin

It's either Wilson or Szabo



BERLIN, Sept. 6: For Wilson Kipketer, racing for a one million dollar jackpot is just another day at the office, reports Reuters.

"For every work you get a salary," the Kenyan-born Dane said ahead of Tuesday's final Golden League meeting, where he needs a one more 800 metres victory to pocket at least 500,000 dollars.

"My job is to run fast and if I run fast enough, they pay me well. I'm running pretty fast right now."

Kipketer is one of two athletes in the Romanians Gabriela Szabo is the other — in contention for a jackpot divided among those who win at all seven Golden League meets.

World champion Kipketer can expect another tough challenge from South African Hezekiel Sepeng, who pushed him all the way in the Seville final last month.

Also in great shape, and feeling fresh at the end of the season, is Japhet Kimutai of Kenya who clocked the same time as Sepeng in Friday's meeting in Brussels when they finished second and third behind Kipketer.

Back at his best after battling malaria last year, the world record holder ran the fastest 800 metres this year in Brussels in one minute 42.27 seconds.

Gabriela Szabo has looked all but unbeatable over the 5,000 metres this season and she is determined to finish the job in Berlin.

"It's difficult," she said. "You lose one race and you lose everything. But I want to win this thing badly and will give it everything I have."

The blonde Romanian used her trademark kick some 300 metres from home to beat close friend Zahara Guaziz of Morocco in the world championships 5,000 metres final and did the same trick over 3,000 metres at the Brussels Golden League

meeting.

Another one to have won all his races is Kenyan steeplechaser Bernard Barnasai but the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) told him he could forget about a share of the money.

The 3,000 metres steeplechase world record holder was disqualified from the jackpot for saying he had asked compatriot Christopher Koskei to let him win in Zurich last month.

Barnasai, who completed a unique sprint double in Seville, is getting tired after an exhausting season and is unlikely to threaten the world record he set in 9.79 seconds in June in Athens.

The best bet for a world record in Berlin's Olympic stadium seems to be the rarely-run 2,000 metres.

Moroccan Hicham El Guerrouj, the 1,500 metres world champion, certainly looks capable of improving the 11-year-old mark of 4:47.88 set by Algerian Noureddine Morceli.

El Guerrouj, the 1,500 metres and mile world record holder, proved he could do damage over longer distances by becoming the second best performer over 3,000 metres when he clocked 7:23.09 in Brussels.

Jong honoured
SEOUL, Sept. 6: Long-distance runner Jong Song Ok of North Korea has received a hero's title for winning the women's marathon at the Athletics World Championships last month, the North's media said Monday, reports AP.

The Supreme People's Assembly, or parliament, issued a decree Saturday on awarding Jong the titles of hero and people's sportsman, a gold star medal and national flag order first class, the Korean Central News Agency said.

The medals are the highest honours given by North Korea to its citizens.



WILSON KIPKETER

After outclassing the opposition again in Brussels, Barnasai said he was considering taking action against the sports' ruling body. "Once I've run in Berlin, then I'll do something," he said.

The Kenyan's Dutch manager, Jos Hermens, confirmed Barnasai, who has denied any wrongdoing, was likely to challenge the IAAF's decision to rule

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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