

Asprilla gets into trouble

SAO PAULO, Sept 21: Controversial Colombian international striker Faustino Asprilla faces a rap at Brazilian side Palmeiras for not reporting back for training yesterday after spending several days back home in Bogota, reports AFP.

Former Parma and Newcastle forward Asprilla asked Palmeiras for four days off to attend to personal affairs. He was expected back yesterday but failed to show up.

The Sao Paulo outfit's director of football Sebastiao Lapolla told Brazilian media that the club had not heard from Asprilla, who has spent much of his time on the bench since arriving from Parma, where he had only at bit part last season as Parma won the UEFA Cup.

Palmeiras coach Luis Felipe Scolari has claimed the 29-year-old is not fit enough to play for 90 minutes.

Asprilla recently let it be known that if he did not hold down a first team place he would look for a move back to Europe.

Palmeiras are the reigning Libertadores Cup holders, and will play European Champions Manchester United in the intercontinental Cup final in November in Tokyo.

Voinea clinches Samsung Open

BOURNEMOUTH, England, Sept 21: Unheralded Italy-based Romanian Adrian Voinea scored a surprise win in the rain-affected Samsung Open here on Monday, outlasting Austrian fifth seed Stefan Koubek 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 in the final, reports AFP.

Voinea, ranked a modest 133 on the ATP computer, overcame a dismal start against favourite Koubek, who faded after romping through the opening set.

As darkness began to fall Koubek's error rate increased while Voinea got more and more into his stride to pick up his reward -- the first ATP Tour title of his career.

"This is some kind of a miracle for me," said Voinea. "This is more than great."
"It looked at one stage as if the tournament might not finish at all as the two were still going at it hammer and tongs as dusk closed in, but Voinea just managed to polish off the win in time to the relief of organisers, who had feared having to abandon the event for the first time in its 75-year history."

They were aided by a let up in the bad weather in the mid-afternoon as well as curtailed semifinals.

Voinea had needed only 11 minutes to complete four games and a 6-3, 6-4 win over third-seeded Moroccan Younes El Aynoui and the other semifinal was never completed.

Instead, top-seeded Swede Thomas Enqvist pulled out with a back injury which had worsened overnight with the score at one set all and 5-5 in the third.

Koubek, aged 22, who recently beat the former world number one Thomas Muster and looks to be part of the new guard for Austria, will play in the Davis Cup this week against title holders Sweden.

Women's football

HARBIN, China, Sept 21: The national team of the DPR, Korea yesterday beat Chinese club Beijing Chengjian 1-0 in a women's soccer friendly here, reports Xinhua.

After a goalless first half, Kim Tan Si scored the winner in the 70th minute, blasting from 20 metres the ball past Beijing goalie Zhou Yanping.

Beijing, which claimed six Chinese national team members, also had chances in the 19th and 26th minutes in the first half.

2004 Olympics Futsal may see light

SINGAPORE, Sept 21: Futsal, the five-a-side indoor version of football, is being promoted as a contender for the Olympic Games, reports AFP.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Peter Velappan said the sport's world governing body FIFA would push for futsal to be included in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, the Straits Times daily reported on Tuesday.

Rain rescues Mauresmo

TOKYO, Sept 21: Amelie Mauresmo struggled to overcome a spirited challenge from American lucky loser Tracy Singian in a rain-interrupted first round clash at the Princess Cup tennis tournament on Tuesday, reports AFP.

The French fifth seed was one set down and 15-40 at 1-1 in the second when rain forced the players off court.

When they returned 75 minutes later, Mauresmo was a different player, completing the match 2-6, 6-3, 6-1 with total ease.

"I just tried to get back into the match mentally, analyse the situation, analyse her game and see what I was doing wrong tactically," Mauresmo said of the interruption.

"I think I came back a lot stronger in the second part of the game."

"The rain delay was probably good for me, but I've been in this position before and I know I could have come back also without the rain delay."

An array of hard-hitting service returns was the basis of the successful first set for the 19-year-old American, whose parents come from the Philippines.

But Singian, ranked 202nd against Mauresmo's 14th, appeared too tense when she took a 4-2 lead in the first set and hit four double faults in the seventh game before taking the set.

After coming back to the court, Singian lost three points in a row, two on her mistakes, to give an advantage point to Mauresmo and committed another double fault to go down 1-2.

From then on, Mauresmo was never really in danger. In the second round, Mauresmo will take on Japanese qualifier Shinobu Asagoe, who defeated Canadian qualifier Vanessa Webb 6-4, 6-1.

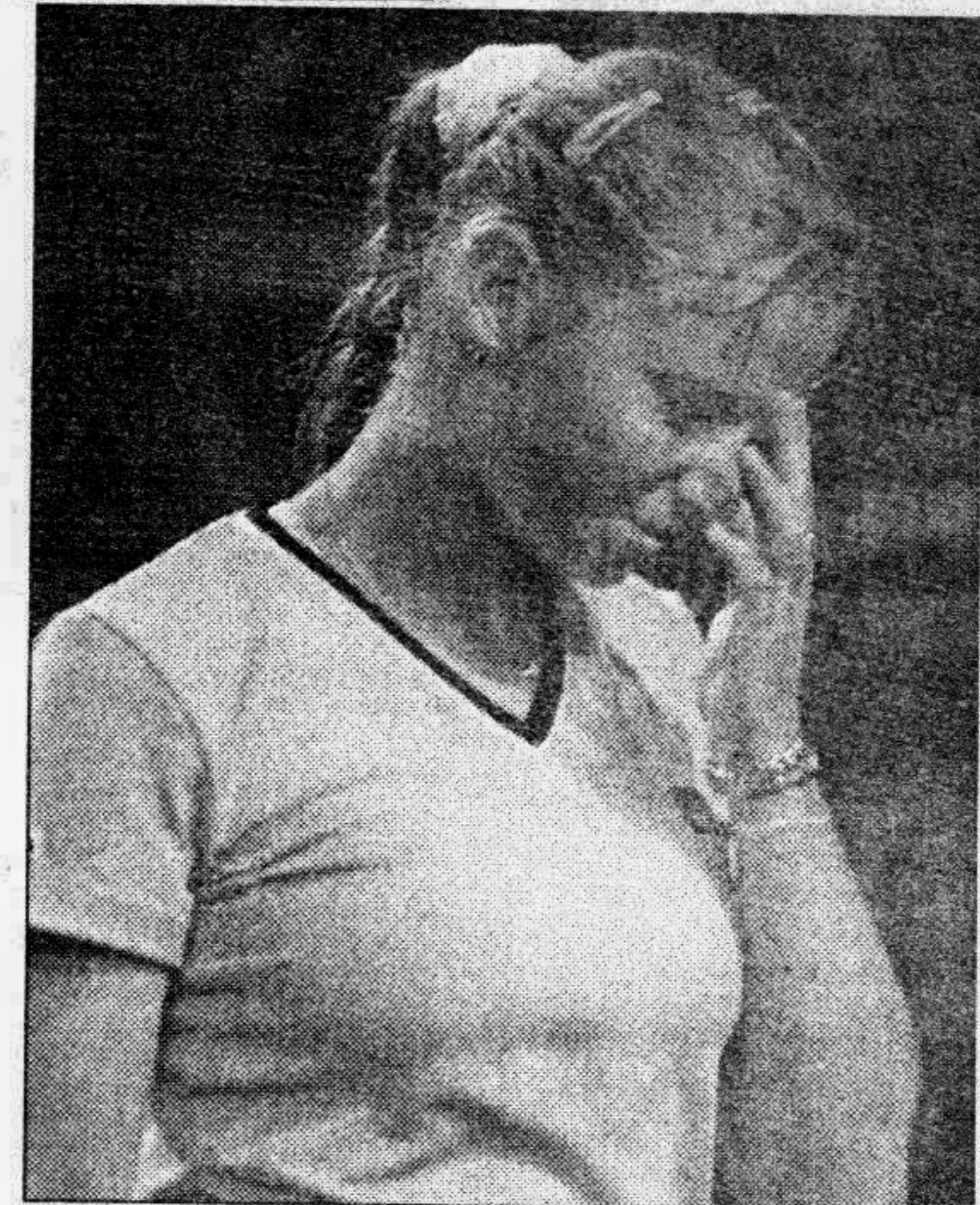
ment. Maureen Drake of Canada clinched her second round spot before the rain started, beating Olga Barabanshikova of Belarus 6-4, 6-2.

BRIEF SCORES

Singles 1st rd
Shinobu Asagoe (Jpn) bt Vanessa Webb (Can) 6-4, 6-1
Maureen Drake (Can) bt Olga Barabanshikova (Blr) 6-4, 6-2

Amelie Mauresmo (Fra x5) bt Tracy Singian (USA) 2-6, 6-3, 6-1
Yuka Yoshida (Jpn) bt Silviya Talaja (Cro) 7-6, 4-6, 6-3
Conchita Martinez (Spa x6) bt Jelena Dokic (Aus) 6-3, 6-2
Anna Smashnova (Isr) bt Corina Morariu (USA) 2-6, 7-5, 6-1

Nicol Pratt (Aus) leads Meilen Tu (USA) 3-2
Miroslava Vavrinec (Svi) bt Tara Snyder (USA) 6-1, 2-1



Australian Jelena Dokic is disappointed after losing to Conchita Martinez in the Princess Cup yesterday. — AFP photo

Koreas to play friendly b'ball

SEOUL, Sept 21: South and North Korean basketballers are to play their first friendly match, probably watched by the North's supreme leader, Kim Jong-Il, organisers said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Officials of the Hyundai Group said joint teams of top-notch South Korean men and women pro basketballers will visit Pyongyang for the "Unification Basketball Tournament" slated for September 26-29.

Chung Ju-Yung, founder of the Hyundai Group, will go with the team.

The Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, the North's key organ in charge of dealing with Asia-Pacific affairs, has agreed to help air the games via satellite, Hyundai officials said.

"The North Korean teams will pay a return visit to Seoul around next March," a Hyundai Group official said.

Hyundai officials and North Korean authorities agreed last week in Pyongyang to hold regular inter-Korean sports exchanges, including basketball, volleyball and table tennis matches.

South Korean intelligence authorities said Kim Jong-Il is enthusiastic about basketball and fond of watching US professionals' games with his 28-year-old son, Kim Jung-Nam, on satellite TVs.

The two Koreas, which have been locked in a tense truce since the end of the Korean War in 1953, had sporadic sports exchanges between the late 1980s and early 1990s, mainly in table tennis and football but never in basketball.

Hyundai has been spearheading in South Korea's efforts to increase economic exchanges with the Stalinist country.

Davis Cup Ferreira-less South Africa

LONDON, Sept 21: South Africa will have to tackle Britain in their Davis Cup clash in Birmingham this weekend without the experienced Wayne Ferreira as the countries bid for a place in the World Group, reports AFP.

South African team captain Carl Tiley had been hoping to convince the world number 38 to fly to Britain from San Francisco.

But a spokeswoman for the South African Tennis Association said Monday that Ferreira would almost certainly decline the invitation.

"He (Ferreira) e-mailed me this morning saying that his wife had given birth to their first child on his birthday (September 12). As far as I know he is unlikely to play," the spokeswoman said.

They had to name his starting line-up last week and selected Grant Stafford and Neville Godwin for the singles, with John-Lafnie de Jager and David Adams playing the doubles matches.

However, Tiley is allowed to make two changes up to one hour before the draw is made.

Ferreira has won two of his four matches against British number one Tim Henman, and four of nine matches against Greg Rusedski.

Farina fairly pleased

SYDNEY, Sept 21: Australian national coach Frank Farina heads to Europe this week buoyed by a record sponsorship deal which will boost preparations for the 2002 World Cup football qualifying campaign, reports AFP.

LG Electronics Tuesday agreed to pay Soccer Australia around four million dollars (2.6 million US) for the naming rights to the four national teams - the Socceroos, the under-23 Olyroos, the under-20 Young Socceroos and the under-17 Jozeys.

The deal will cover a minimum of two years with an option for a third.

Farina said the sponsorship would probably be used to help establish national team training camps overseas.

"I hope in the future we will be able to self-fund our trips in terms of maybe having a relationship with clubs in Europe where we can play games at their ground and the trip would be funded through gates which we get playing international teams over there," Farina said.

Farina said he would start his two-week trip overseas in Manchester because the majority of his overseas-based stars were based in the north of Britain - Manchester United's Mark Bosnich, Harry Kewell of Leeds United, Middlesbrough's Mark Schwarzer and Glasgow Celtic striker Mark Viduka.

"The purpose of my trip there is not necessarily the players. There doesn't seem to be any problem with them," Farina said.

"It's more getting some sort of relationship set up with clubs as well as with the English and Scottish FAs, putting our name down for games - that's the major purpose of what I'm going over there for."

Farina will also attempt to confirm the availability of three of his leading overseas-based players for two matches against Brazil in November.

He said the only overseas-based players whose clubs had yet to confirm their availability for the games were Stan Lazaridis (Birmingham City), Viduka and Ned Zelic (1860 Munich).

Soccer Australia said Australia had provisionally agreed to participate in a four-team tournament next February in Chile which also features Slovakia and Bulgaria. There are also plans for another four-team competition in Australia next June.

Gold Leaf in Pakistan

The record breaking 80ft racing yacht — John Player Gold Leaf is making good time as it sailed across the Arabian Sea enroute to Pakistan where it arrived on September 16, says a press release.

"Pakistan marks the 12th voyage we have visited on the voyage so far and it is a stop that I have personally been looking forward to," commented Joe Outred, captain of the John Player Gold Leaf.

"Cricket enthusiasts amongst the crew, myself included are eager to see the country that has produced so many world-leading sportsmen."

The last stop for the boat was the Sultanate of Oman where the Gold Leaf sailed from the renowned holiday resort Salalah to the capital city of Muscat, a journey that saw a fascinating variation of climatic conditions and scenery.

"The mountains in Salalah were so green and lush, such contrast to the dramatic and beautiful stark scenery of Jeddah," explained Outred.

"We set sail for Muscart into seasonal monsoon conditions — cool, damp and foggy, the waters felt more like the English Channel than the Arabian Sea! We actually had to don our wa-

terproof thermal clothing as night drew in and the temperatures dropped further still."

Fortunately the choppy waters of Salalah gave way to the calmer seas and clearer skies of Muscat at which point crew fisherman Guy Benstead had another success when he reeled in a Maui Maui which was swiftly prepared for dinner.

"We were surprised how clear and full of fish the seas is in Muscat," said Benstead. "The local lobster and prawns were exceptional and it is easy to understand why Muscat has developed such a good reputation for its seafood." Four fishing lines trailing behind the boat have supplemented the crew's diet with the occasional fresh fish, which is sometimes cooked or served up "Sushi" style. In Oman, they managed to catch a large hamour, a local delicacy, which was devoured in no time.

The crew members keep their spirits high by keeping a positive often-lighthearted outlook on daily life. "I believe that mental health is also vitally important in our business," Outred points out. "Our cheerfulness keeps us from feeling homesick and we have become one big family, we look out for each other, this is vital to the crew working together effectively as a team."

With 12 countries already behind them the crew fitness has ensured the smooth passage of the boat and their team spirit has carried them through the difficult times. "There is no feeling to beat rising to a challenge such as the Voyage of Discovery, by respecting our bodies and working as a team we can achieve great things, both myself and the crew are now fitter than we have ever been and are eager to 'discover' the next four destinations."

The John Player Gold Leaf, an 80ft Maxi racing yacht, left Tower Bridge on June 19, bound for the Voyage of Discovery. The proposed 170-day voyage will see the yacht skirting the coastlines of three continents through some of the world's most interesting waters, including Oman, Pakistan, the UAE, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. With the final leg of the route taking the journey south, the Voyage of Discovery finishes in the Bay of Bengal.



The John Player team on the Discovery voyage.

Asian soccer scene

Qatar's Al-Sadd pushed back the determined challenge of UAE rivals, Al-Wahda to snatch a 1-1 draw and qualify for the second round of the 19th Asian Club Championship in a return match played at home on September 17, says a press release.

Al-Sadd had battled Al Wahda to a 2-2 draw on the first leg of their West Asian encounter. The Qatari side were trailing 0-1 after Dain Faye put UAE ahead in the ninth minute but then Adel Dedova Al saved his side with a well taken goal with just three minutes to the end of regulation time.

Al-Sadd now face another formidable second round hurdle in Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal who drew a first round bye. The second round match is scheduled for December 3.

Also making the second round in the West Asian group was Kazakhstan's Irtysh Pavlodar and Varzob of Tajikistan. Irtysh swamped their Uzbekistan challengers, Pakhtaktkor 5-2 in a second leg match while Varzob drew 1-1 against Dynamo of Kyrgyzstan to book their ticket. The match was also played on September 17.

Irtysh Pavlodar had won the first leg 7-0 with Varzob beating Dynamo 4-0. Irtysh Pavlodar and Varzob will meet on November 19 and December 3 respectively in their second round encounter.

Other West Asian teams which have qualified for the second round are Piruzli of Iran, Al Ansar of Lebanon and Police Club of Iraq who drew first round byes while Al Wahda of Yemen had an easy passage following the withdrawal of Kuwait's Al-Qadisia.

East Asian qualifiers to date for the second round of the Asian Club Championship are Jubilo Iwata and Kashima Antlers of Japan, India's Mohun Bagan, Valencia of Malaysia, Singapore's Armed Forces, Song of Vietnam and Suwon Blue Wings of Korea. The

one other qualifier will come from the match between GD Lam Pak of Macau and Sintana of Thailand. This match is to be played on October 1 and October 3.

In the 10th Asian Cup Winners' Cup, Kaisar Hurricane of Kazakhstan edged Tajikistan rivals Khodzja Karim in the race for the second round berth. Both teams tied 3-0 in the second round match played on September 17 after having played to an identical outcome on the first leg, with the second leg match having to be decided on penalty kicks. It was Kaisar Hurricane who stormed into the second leg with a 4-3 victory.

Kaisar Hurricane now face Navbahkor of Uzbekistan who had a first round bye.

Iran's Esteghal made the second round in style with an 8-0 drubbing of Lebanon's Homenmen. The first leg tie between the two teams had also ended with a heavy drubbing for Homenmen who lost 0-7. Esteghal meet Itihad of Saudi Arabia who had a first round bye in the first leg of their second round match on November 26 with the return match on December 3.

In another decider for the second round the Al-Jaish of Syria beat UAE's Al-Ain 2-1 in a first round away match on September 16 to clinch the second round berth. Al-Jaish had earlier lost 0-1 to Al-Ain.

Shankly's boots go under the hammer

LONDON, Sept 21: A pair of the legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly's football boots are being put up for sale at a London auction of soccer memorabilia, the auctioneers Christie's said yesterday, reports Reuters.

The boots, last worn in 1974, are expected to fetch up to 3,000 pounds (4,868 dollars) at the sale on September 24.

Football fans can take their pick from a large selection of medals, caps, shirts and programmes that range from a Newcastle United tepal to a football-shaped "extra time" watch.

Mad about each other

BERLIN, Sept 21: Rumours that tennis champions Steffi Graf and Andre Agassi are now a couple got a boost Monday by pictures of the two kissing in public, including one on the popular daily Bild's front page, reports AFP.

They smile, shine, and kiss each other -- and not just on the cheek," the mass-circulation German daily gushed.

Bild ran pictures of Graf, who is German, with Agassi as they watched a championship boxing match Saturday in his home town of Las Vegas, Nevada.

In one shot, the two are locked in a kiss, while a second shows them sitting side-by-side with broad smiles.

"Now they are showing the whole world. Yes, we are together!" Bild added, noting they had made their entrance during the 10th round of a bout between Felix Trinidad and Oscar de la Hoya which was attended by 11,600 people.

The popular German daily on Saturday reported the news in another front-page story which quoted a US journalist who said he had seen Agassi and Graf "kissing and walking hand-in-hand" in Beverly Hills.

Front-page photos showed smiling Steffi, 30, and a bare-chested Agassi, 29, joined by a heart.

On Thursday, the German weekly Die Zeit quoted Graf as saying she had broken up with her old boyfriend, German racecar driver Michael Bartels.

Graf, who was the world's top-rated woman player for 37 straight weeks and has won 27 Grand Slam titles, has laid claim to being the finest woman player of the century.

Agassi is the current world number one men's player after winning the US Open September 12, which followed his comeback triumph at the French Open in Paris making him the fifth man to complete a career Grand Slam.

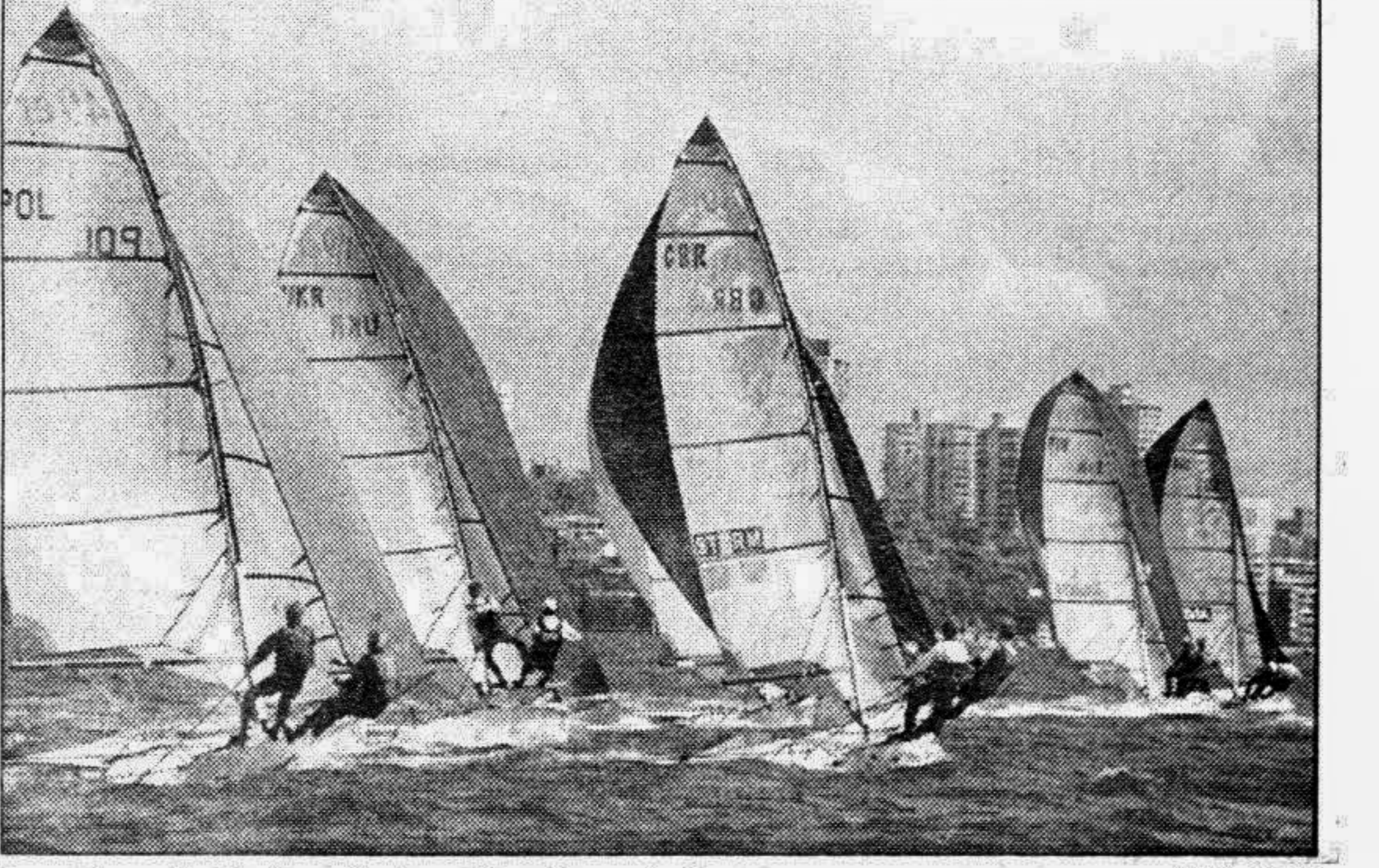
Bild wondered in a story if their love affair had not begun in Paris in May.

Agassi may said then that Graf's victory, the culmination of her comeback, had inspired him one day before his own.

Said Bild: "Paris, what more beautiful place to fall in love?"



Russian Vjatceslav Ekimov celebrates after winning the 15th stage of the Tour de Spain at Valcencia on September 20. — AFP photo



Scene from the Sydney Harbour Regatta yesterday. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 Witnessed
- 4 Jai follower
- 8 Losses firmness
- 12 "Hail, Caesar!"
- 13 Get money for
- 14 Witticism
- 15 Flip in the pre-swam mcdc
- 18 Country music?
- 19 Mound stat
- 21 Exist arms
- 22 Take Greeley's advice?
- 26 Outer area
- 29 Pugilistic tactic
- 30 City to fly down to
- 31 Slush
- 32 Actor Kilmer
- 33 Motion of the ocean
- 34 Slout relative
- 35 Junior
- 36 Incarcerated no more
- 37 Become bungled

DOWN

- 1 It's a long story
- 2 Revlon rival
- 3 What Jesus did, in John 11:35
- 4 State strongly
- 5 Entertain You?
- 6 Near Miss?
- 7 Criminal arms
- 8 Papoose carrier
- 9 Summer abbr.
- 10 Baseball great
- 11 Prohias cartoon character
- 16 Busy U.S. airport
- 20 Plagiarize
- 23 One of HOMES
- 24 Faction
- 25 Three-sloth
- 26 Coarse tobacco
- 27 Narc's unit
- 28 Concept
- 29 Dave's competition
- 32 Trips
- 33 Radio soap heroine
- 35 Bikini top
- 36 Minimum
- 38 "1-2-3, ..."
- 39 Schooner
- 42 Particular
- 43 Megalo-maniacal seaman
- 44 Food
- 45 Satchel
- 46 Flamenco cheer
- 47 Humor
- 49 Mixed-over matter

Solution time: 26 mins.

PAUL BAER TWO ACNE UNTO HER THEATRICALS BEL SEEKER ELOPE EXMUSED DUTY MITL GION AISE AXIE BRON DEEP HER GIRL AIDLAI EMPIRE COO THEAUSURUS EGG MITRA PANT DEY ECURU SEED

Yesterday's answer

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31				32				33		
34			35		36					
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45	46	47		48	49					
50				51					52	
53				54					55	

CRYPTOQUIP

E M Z S W N L T W L G M E F X W V

G T L F, L R F V B S Z F B M E T V F B

B X N D N V F L L X W V L R F N T Z D.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE MUSIC LIKED BEST BY COMPUTER OPERATORS REALLY HAS TO BE DISKO.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals C

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.