

## Belgrade freaks out

BELGRADE, Oct 10: Football fans went wild in Belgrade Saturday night after Yugoslavia's 2-2 draw with Croatia, allowing Yugoslavia to qualify for Euro 2000, reports AFP.

Some firebombs from automatic weapons, others let off fire-crackers and lit red and yellow flaming torches.

Others drove hundreds of cars through the city center, with horns blaring and passengers sitting on the roofs, waving Serbian and Yugoslav flags and shouting slogans. Thousands of others walked cheering toward central Terazije Street.

Two trolleybuses were demolished at the main Republic Square and broken beer bottles littered the streets.

But no injuries were reported, and no police were in evidence, even though the fans were on the streets at the same time as some 3,000 opposition supporters on one of their regular marches to demand the resignation of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

During the match, some 2,000 people converged on Republic Square to watch the game on a huge screen.

The protesters, whose marches have been limited by the police on some days, passed freely along central streets and went back to the square without incident.

But when Alliance for Change leaders, led by Zoran Djindjic of the Democratic Party, showed up at the stage intending to greet some 15,000 people, both the fans and the opposition supporters, they were greeted with thrown beer cans and fireworks.

None of the leaders was hurt, but they decided to let the crowd continue the football celebration, saying the next rally would be held on Sunday.

Belgrade's streets reverted to normal some three hours later.

Similar celebrations also took place in several other Serbian towns, including the country's second and third-largest towns of Novi Sad and Nis, the independent news agency Beta reported.

In Podgorica, capital of Montenegro, which with Serbia makes up the Yugoslav federation, shots from guns and automatic weapons as well as several detonators could be heard after the end of match in Zagreb as Montenegrins turned out to celebrate in the city center.

## Guppy, Lampard awaiting debut

LONDON, Oct 10: Leicester City wing-back Steve Guppy and West Ham United midfielder Frank Lampard will win their first England caps in Sunday's friendly international against Belgium, reports AFP.

The match at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland will also see coach Kevin Keegan award a first cap under his reign to experienced Middlesbrough midfielder Paul Ince, his 46th in total.

In attack, Newcastle's Alan Shearer and Sunderland's Kevin Phillips will pair up in a drastically altered team, with only Tony Adams, Martin Keown and Shearer surviving from the starting line-up in the European Championship qualifier with Poland last month.

England were handed a place in the European Championships play-off matches on Saturday when Sweden beat Poland 2-0.

7. Amid boycott threats, frantic efforts at a comprise followed, culminating in a meeting between FIFA president Sepp Blatter and AFC chief Ahmad Shah in Zurich on September 7.

In response, FIFA offered Asia a half berth that required the continent's third qualifier to play off with Europe's 13th on a home-and-away basis.

With the threatened boycott of the qualifying rounds resolved, Velappan said at least 40 Asian countries would participate in the qualifying rounds.

The Asian supremo said the AFC had decided to play off the first round of the qualifiers in 10 groups of at least four teams each. The draw will be made in Tokyo on December 7.

Velappan said the first round would be held between March and July 2001, with the 10 group winners divided into two groups of five each contesting a second round "very likely on a home-and-away basis to create more interest and competition among them."

Each second round group winner will proceed straight to the 2002 World Cup and the two runners-up will play home-and-away for the right to contest the 13th qualifier from Europe, also home-and-away, he said.

## Melbourne to host 2006 C'wealth Games

MELBOURNE, Oct 10: Melbourne, the only city left in the bidding, was named host city for the 2006 Commonwealth Games on Sunday following a presentation to the Commonwealth Games Federation in Fiji, reports AFP.

The 72 delegates at the federation meeting had no formal questions for the Melbourne team. The city of Wellington, New Zealand, pulled out in March, saying it did not have the money to challenge the Australian bid.

Walker said more than 200 million US dollars would be spent on the Games, about a third of that on facilities.

More than 6,000 athletes and team officials will make the trip to Melbourne for the Games, which will run from March 15-26, 2006.

## Kabaeva shines bright

TOKYO, Oct 10: World champion Alina Kabaeva proved she is the gymnast to beat in the Sydney Olympics next year by scoring four perfect scores to defend the Aeon Cup Rhythmic Gymnastics Championships Sunday, reports AFP.

The 16-year-old Russian student, who also took home two apparatus gold medals at the World Championships in Osaka last week, received a perfect 10 points in the rope, hoop, ball and ribbon to retain the all-around title.

Her teammate, world bronze medalist Yulia Barsoukova was second with 39.891 points and world silver medalist Ioulia Raskina of Belarus third with 39.825 points.

Former world champion Elena Vitrychenko of Ukraine, who stopped Kabaeva's clean sweep of gold medals by winning the two apparatus titles in Osaka, ended fourth with 39.728 points.

Kabaeva almost missed the perfect victory as her score in the ball at first appeared to be 9.900 points on the electric board. It was corrected to 10.000 several minutes later.

"I felt I scored 10 points in every performance, not only in the ball. When I saw 9.900, I thought maybe I made a mistake that only judges noticed,

and I tried to concentrate on my next one," said Kabaeva.

"I felt very tired and it was tough to continue to play after the World Championships, but I did my 100 per cent and I'm very happy to win both the individual and team titles," she added.

Kabaeva, whose next goal is to win the gold medal in the Sydney Olympics, said she could not promise to win the Olympic title, but added that she had no weaknesses at the moment.

Her coach Irina Viner said: "She is going to use new music and add another technique for the Olympics. Her performance will be more interesting. Everything is going well with her."

Vitrychenko's elegant, accurate and artistic performances had set the ideal for the sport, but a rule change after the Atlanta Olympics gives more points to Kabaeva's technically difficult, sometimes acrobatic performances.

But it always depends on judges, who gave two perfect 10 scores to Vitrychenko in Osaka to give her the rope and hoop gold medals. She also received two 10s in Saturday's first round.

"My goal is to become the Olympic champion," said Vitrychenko, who had to be satisfied with the bronze medal in Atlanta.

"Even if I made a great success in another field than the rhythmic gymnastics, I would

not be happier than when I become the Olympic champion," added Vitrychenko, now 22.

Meanwhile, Chinese coaches were left fuming after their women wowed a partisan crowd but failed to impress the judges.

The hosts - tipped as possible gold medal contenders - qualified for the final of the women's team event, but were unable to break the dominance of East European nations.

"We are not happy with the scoring," women's coach Wang Qunce told reporters after his team finished fourth overall following the first round behind Romania, Russia and Ukraine with a score of 39.720.

"We think we should have had higher marks on the balance beam. If we had we could have finished above Russia," Wang said.

"We believe China's technical level is now the highest in the world."

Another Chinese coach, Liu Guicheng, was also unhappy with the marks awarded, citing the performance of the tiny Bai Chunyu on the uneven bars at the Tianjin Sports Centre.

"We should scored much more on the uneven bars, especially for Bai. The scoring was not correct," Liu said.

China's Dong Fangxiao was the top gymnast for the hosts, finishing fifth in the individual standings overall.



## Sport

### Hingis, Pierce to fight it out

FILDERSTADT, Germany, Oct 10: Top seed Martina Hingis of Switzerland will face fourth seed Mary Pierce of France in the final of the Filderstadt Grand Prix here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Hingis needed over two hours to oust defending champion Sandrine Testud of France 6-7, 6-2, 6-4, while Pierce enjoyed a comfortable 6-1, 7-6 victory over German wild card Anke Huber.

Testud, the shock second round conqueror of US Open champion Serena Williams, broke Hingis in the opening game en route to building a 5-3 lead. She failed to serve out for the set at 5-4 but hung on to the tie-break 7-5.

The effort of winning the first set seemed to affect Testud and Hingis took full advantage to break twice in the second set to level the match. The two players exchanged three service breaks at the start of the decider but Hingis hung on to complete her fifth successive victory over the French woman.

Afterwards the world No 1 said: "Sandrine served well in the first set and I couldn't figure out her game. My grip was slippery and I couldn't hold the racket. I changed rackets in the second set and began to read her serve better."

Testud admitted: "I think the match would have been different if I had held serve at 5-4 in the first set. I lost a lot of energy in winning the tiebreak and I had a letdown physically in the second set."

Pierce maintained her unbeaten tie-break record this week by winning her fourth shootout in her straight-sets victory over Huber.

The German struggled to keep the ball in play in the opening set, committing 16 unforced errors. Spurred on by a packed centre court crowd, she broke serve to level at 5-5 in the second set, but Pierce proved too strong in the tie-break, winning 7-2.

Hingis and Pierce, practice partners this week, have met on previous occasions, with the Swiss player holding a slender 6-5 advantage.

### Serena kicks up a fuss

PARIS, Oct 10 (AFP): The flat refusal of the men's professional tour (ATP) to allow US Open women's singles champion Serena Williams to take part in one of their tournaments in Stuttgart has reignited the debate of whether men and women's tennis can or should ever mix.

Williams opened a hornet's nest when she said: "Women's tennis is boring. I can beat the men, after losing to France's Sandrine Testud in her first match at the WTA Grand Prix in Filderstadt, Germany, this week.

Her mother Orecene is clearly made of the same feisty spirit as her daughters Venus and Serena. "We're expecting a positive outcome. Serena can survive against the men," she told German daily Bild.

But the ATP's spokesman Nicola Arzani replied: "To play in an ATP tournament, you must be a member of the ATP. Besides, Serena Williams can not become a member of the ATP because she is a woman. That's all there is to say."

Markus Gunthard, director of the event, said Williams had applied for a wild card but the ATP immediately ruled out a favourable response to her request and others even ridiculed the move.

Boris Becker, the retired German star who was in London Thursday for the Davis Cup draw, said he thought it was a "pretty good joke."

The three-times men's champion added: "If that's the case and she is going to play, lots of men will go the other way and ask for wild-cards into women's competitions and you will see some strange winners of women's Grand Slams."

"I doubt it very much if Serena could compete with the men. She is very masculine and very strong but if you compare her game to the likes of Pete Sampras or Andre Agassi in all honesty you are talking about two different sports."

The gender war debate reopened by Williams is by no means new to the world of tennis.

In 1973 self-styled male chauvinist Bobby Riggs challenged the leading women players of the game to beat him in a much-publicised challenge series predictably dubbed "The Battle of the Sexes."

Billie-Jean King eventually made Riggs eat humble pie by beating him but the fact that Riggs was more of a game amateur than a serious professional made King's victory a pyrric one in many ways.

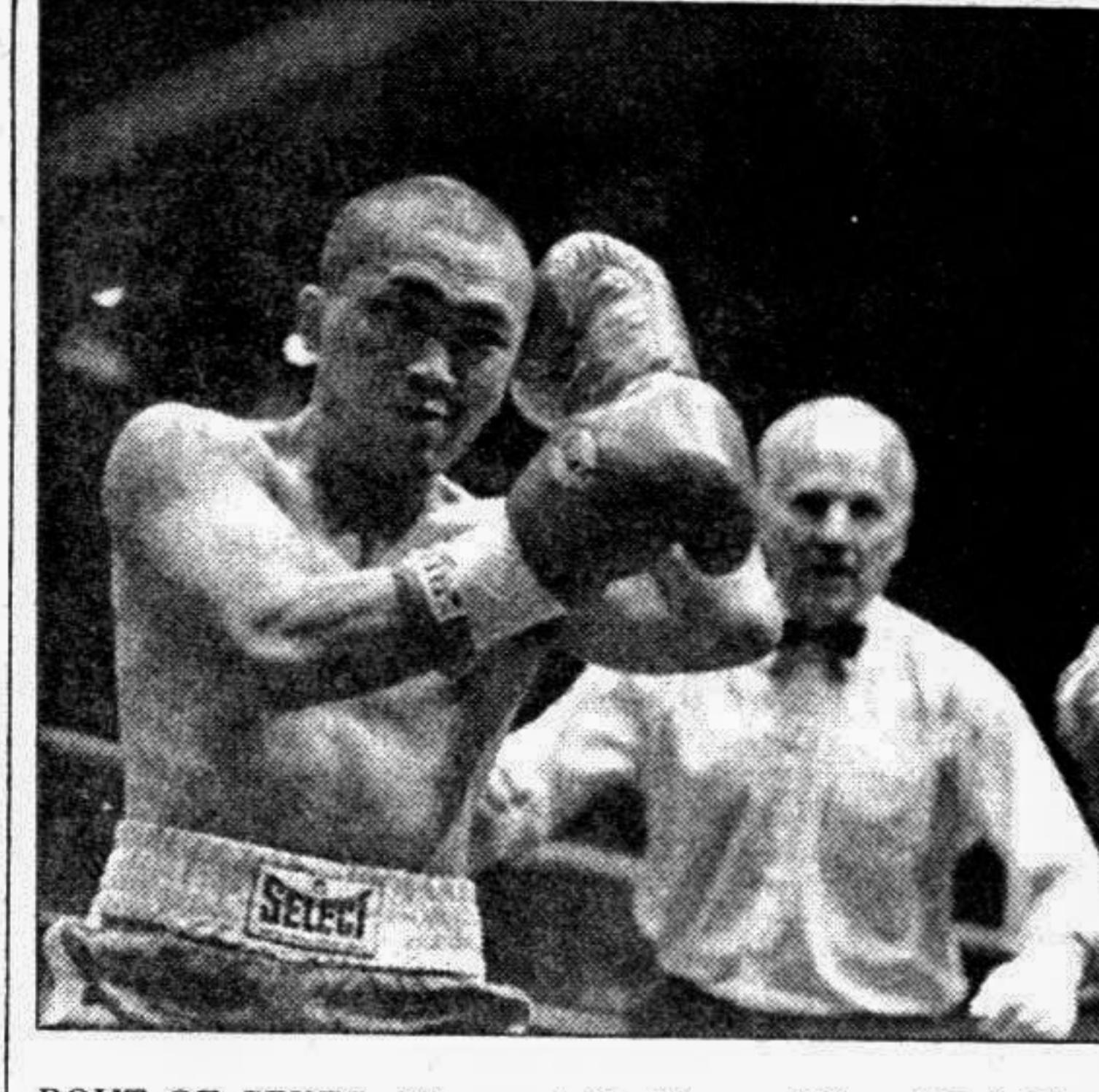
Although Riggs was hardly a top name the much-hyped clash nonetheless pulled in 90 million television viewers.

King, of course, was instrumental in the setting up of the women's tour (WTA) which separated the men's game from the women's with the two tours only crossing paths rarely such as at Grand Slam events.

Holland's Richard Krajicek, Wimbledon champion in 1995, memorably lit the fuse to spark off another skirmish between the two sexes when he voiced his criticism of the women's game in less than diplomatic language.

Branding female stars as "fat, lazy pigs" the Dutchman claimed that even the best talents in the women's game could not live with even the lowest-ranked professional in the men's game.

It was claimed at the time that Martina Navratilova, then the leading force in the women's game, would be unable to match the 1000th ranked man in the ATP standings. The claim was never put to the test, though.



BOUT OF SEXES: Margaret MacGregor (R) and Loi Chow trade punches during their historic fight in Seattle on Saturday night.

— AFP photo

## Woman prevails over man



SEATTLE, Oct 10 (AP): Man vs woman in the ring turned out not to be a fair fight, after all.

Margaret MacGregor won every round on every card of her four-round, history-making bout Saturday night against Loi Chow, a jockey who showed virtually no boxing skills.

McGregor, a 36-year-old hometown favourite from Bremerton, Washington, towered over Chow and threw combinations that racked up points, even if they didn't seem to do any damage.

All three judges scored the bout 40-36 in McGregor's favour.

McGregor, in a red sports bra and gold trunks, landed a right to the head in the first two-minute round, then a four-punch combination. Chow responded by bouncing away. He kept bouncing all over the ring, smiling and doing not much else.

Chow, 0-3, hardly posed a worthy opponent. The 33-year-old from Vancouver threw punches awkwardly, covered up most of the fight, and landed only a few punches. Listed as 5-foot-2, he seemed a head shorter than the 5-4 McGregor.

McGregor, 4-0, threw punches like a trained fighter, even if she never came close to hurting Chow. She was the busier fighter throughout the bout, and never looked intimidated by Chow or the occasion. As the fourth round came to a close, the crowd chanted, "Margaret, Margaret," and she responded with a combination to the body.

"It was like my dream was coming true right before my eyes," McGregor said of those chants. "This is the biggest day of my life."

The crowd of 2,768 roared with delight at the decision in her favour, but boozed Chow for his defensive, lacklustre effort.

"I fought my best tonight," McGregor said. "All I want to do is keep getting better and better. I don't care who it is, I'll fight anybody."

Chow's blood pressure was high an hour before the fight card started, and the doctor told him to rest a while before taking it again to make sure he was okay. Chow passed the test the second time.

Chow blamed his loss on his

high blood pressure, saying that his blood pressure actually peaked at 185 over 115 before he took some medication to bring it down.

"I didn't feel right," Chow said. "I don't think I got whipped, I hit her with a couple of good shots."

Asked what, if anything, the bout proved, Chow responded with a smile and a bit of bravado: "It proves a woman cannot hurt a man."

Asked the same question, McGregor said: "Just that I'm a winner."

A lot of fans, though, attached more significance to the fight.

"I think it's breaking a lot of barriers. I feel like I'm taking part in this big event in history," said Rosemarie Moore, 18, Seattle, attending her first fight.

"Women are saying, 'Hey, we're just as good as you.' We've come a long way."

Another fan disagreed.

"It's not a good thing for boxing," said Sherman Daniels, 47, from Renton, Washington. "With all the controversy, this might be the first and the last time a man and woman fight."

In the second he recorded two more love service games while losing just four points.

That meant Henman needed just one break in each set to extend his record over Ivanisevic to 4-0.

By the time he broke to go ahead 2-1 in the second, he had the erratic Croat talking to both himself and his racket.

Kucera, who only returned to action last week after missing nearly two months with a wrist injury, continued to show no signs of rust as he swept past Kiefer into his first final of the season.

They obliged and so did

Henman, as he defeated the three-time Wimbledon finalist in 56 minutes.

One of the games biggest servers, Ivanisevic was unable