

Gazza wants Queen's seat!

LONDON, Nov 13: England international Paul Gascoigne has lodged a bid to buy the Queen's designated seat at the Old Wembley stadium...

The Middlesbrough star will secure the chair if no one tops his bid... The seat -- from which the Queen handed over the World Cup trophy to England captain Bobby Moore in 1966 -- is made of gold-coloured steel...

Wembley in its current form is to be demolished next autumn, with parts of it being auctioned off to help fund a brand new 90,000 capacity national stadium which will cost 475 million pounds.

Architects are to unveil their new design plans on Monday amid speculation that the giant stadium will feature a new illuminated arch could replace the famous white twin towers as its best-known feature.

The original plan to have four 130 metre-plus white masts soaring above the entrance has been called into question because of its similarity to designs at the Millennium Dome in Greenwich and the Stade de France in Paris.

Wembley spokesman Martin Corrie said: "There has been considerable speculation in recent weeks about many parts of the design."

"Suffice to say we will be holding a press conference on Monday, and will be confirming nothing whatsoever until then."

U-16 tennis WC Argentina win girls' title

PERTH, Nov 13: Argentina claimed the tennis World Cup under-16 girls' youth title for the first time here Saturday when they beat top-seeded Slovak Republic 2-1 in a thrilling final, reports AFP.

The Argentinians clinched the crown when their doubles pair, Maria Emilia Salerni and Eugenia Chialvo, beat Lenka Dlhopolcova and Lubomira Kurhajcova 6-3, 6-2.

In the singles, Dlhopolcova beat Gisela Dulko 6-3, 6-3, while Salerni defeated Kurhajcova 6-3, 6-4.

2-year ban on top SA decathlete

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 13: Top South African decathlete Johannes Blyngaert, who won a gold medal at the All Africa Games here in September, has been banned for two years after failing a doping test, reports AFP.

Blyngaert tested positive for the banned substance Stanozolol, an anabolic and androgenic steroid, after his gold medal win.

Cuban spikers keep pace

KANAZAWA, Japan, Nov 13: Three-time defending champions Cuba defeated the United States for an eighth straight win to keep pace with Russia at the World Cup Women's volleyball tournament on Friday, reports AFP.

The Cubans, also the winners of two straight Olympics and world championships, needed 80 minutes to crush the American challenge, scoring a 25-12, 26-24, 21-25, 25-13 win.

My players played quite well at the beginning, but the Americans fought back excellently in good rhythm and we started to struggle in the second set. The Americans will improve further soon," said Cuban coach Antonio Perdomo.

Atlanta Olympic bronze medalists Brazil outplayed South Korea 25-21, 25-23, 25-12 for a 7-1 record to trail Cuba and Russia, keeping their hopes alive of finishing in the top three and earning a berth in the Sydney Olympics.

"We prepared for the match a lot and we are lucky because the Korean team played Cuba and China earlier in Kanazawa. They seemed to be tired in the third set and we took the advantage," said Brazilian coach Bernardo Rezende.

European champions Russia, hot favourites after beating the Atlanta Olympic medalists to win the World Grand Prix in August, shrugged off a slow start to beat Croatia 25-22, 25-10, 25-17 in Sendai, north of Tokyo.

Eves' tennis in transition

NEW YORK, Nov 13 (Reuters): The changing of the guard in women's tennis becomes official next week with a retirement party for Steffi Graf at the season-ending Chase Championships...

New York tennis fans get a chance to bid farewell to the German superstar on Tuesday night after being denied that opportunity when Graf retired prior to the US Open.

The absence of Graf and Novotna and three-time winner Monica Seles, who is sidelined by injury, leaves 19-year-old defending champion Martina Hingis as the lone player in the field of 16 to have won the prestigious year-end title.

While losing Graf, Seles and Novotna, the 1999 Chase Championships receives an exciting infusion of new blood as the title-hungry Williams sisters make the most eagerly anticipated debuts in the season finale since Jennifer Capriati's 1990 appearance.

Venus Williams, 19, qualified in 1998 but withdrew with an injury, delaying her first Madison Square Garden appearance.

"It just seems like I should've been there two years ago. For some reason or other I've never been there," she said.

Eighteen-year-old Serena Williams storms into the season finale to conclude a spectacular breakout year in which she beat her celebrated sibling to the Grand Slam punch by capturing the US Open crown among her five 1999 titles -- the first of her fledgling career.

Venus was devastated upon losing her US Open semifinal to Hingis, failing to fulfil her end of her father's promise of an all-Williams final. But she picked up her sixth title of the year with a win over the Swiss teen on Hingis. Home turf in Zurich last month and beat her again at the Grand Slam Cup.

Joining Hingis and the Williams sisters as serious title threats are relative old timers Lindsay Davenport, last year's runner-up, and 1997 losing finalist Mary Pierce.

Davenport, the 23-year-old Wimbledon champion, is making her sixth consecutive appearance, while Pierce, 24, is playing for the sixth time in seven years.

Win or lose, Hingis will finish the year with the world number one ranking.

"One thing's for sure, I'm going to stay number one no matter what happens. That's a little bit of pressure off me," said Hingis, who seems to put more stock in computer rankings than any other tennis player, male or female.

"I wanted to finish the year number one. But if possible, I'd like to defend this tournament, since I won last year."

Winner of a WTA Tour-best seven titles this year, including the Australian Open, Hingis expressed surprise this week at how far ahead of her rivals she was in rankings points.

There were four different Grand Slam champions. But I was the most consistent. I am kind of proud about that," she said.

In addition to Serena Williams, the 16-player field features two other first-time qualifiers -- Austrian Barbara Schett, who made the jump into the world's top 10 in 1999, and Amelie Mauresmo, the surprise Australian Open finalist.

The proceedings will have a decidedly French flavour this year with five of eight first-round matches featuring a French player. Besides Pierce and Mauresmo, Nathalie Tauziat, Julie Halard-Decugis and Sandrine Testud have been invited to the Garden party.

One of the truly unique elements of the WTA Tour's season-ending Championships will be missing, however, after officials decided to replace the only best-of-five-sets final in women's tennis with the usual best-of-three format.

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Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov makes a double-fisted backhand return against Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic at the Kremlin Cup in Moscow on November 12.

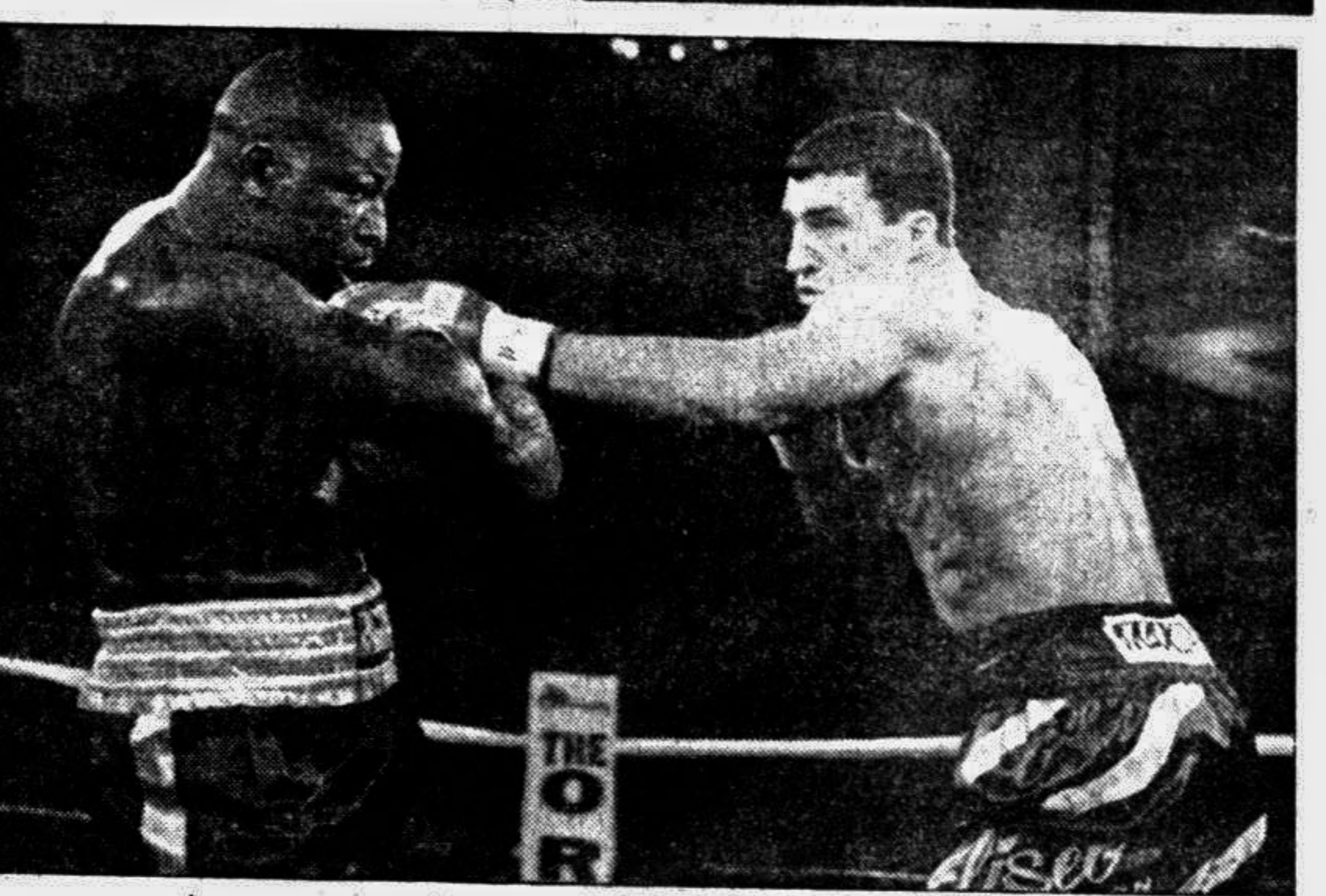
Vogts joins UEFA

BERLIN, Nov 13: Former Germany national team coach Bert Vogts is to become an observer for European football's governing body UEFA, Bild newspaper reported Friday, reports AFP.

Fifty-two-year-old Vogts, a member of West Germany's 1974 World Cup winning side and capped 96 times, will join a commission of experts presided by former Scotland boss Andy Roxburgh and also including Angel Iordanescu and Javier Clemente, former coaches of Romania and Spain respectively.

Vogts, who coached Germany to the 1996 European Championship in England, will not be paid for the role and will be required to attend important matches and deliver a report. He will meet his fellow observers twice a year.

Vogts resigned as national team coach in the wake of the unsuccessful France 98 campaign where Germany were eliminated in the quarterfinals by Croatia.



Ukrainian Wlasimir Klitschko (R) lands a left on Phil Jackson of the United States during their bout in Las Vegas on November 12.

Everton mad about Max

LIVERPOOL, Nov 13: English Premiership side Everton are closing in on New England Revolution's American striker Joe-Max Moore, reports AFP.

The Merseysiders have agreed terms with the 28-year-old and now need to acquire a work permit for the United States international, who has scored 20 goals in his 78 games for the national side.

"The Premiership is the whole reason I am coming. It is the best league in Europe right now and just to have the opportunity to play with and against the best players in the world is the biggest part for me," Moore told Everton ClubCall.

"I have always dreamed of playing at the highest level. Everybody in America knows it's the best league in the world and everybody is in awe of the pace of the game over there."

Moore would be following in the footsteps of fellow American international Roy Wegerle, John Harkes, Cobi Jones and Kasey Keller who have also played in English soccer's top flight.

Kafelnikov reaches semis

MOSCOW, Nov 13: Top seed and defending champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov reached the Kremlin Cup semifinals for the fifth successive time with a 7-6, 6-3 victory over former doubles partner Daniel Vacek on Friday, reports Reuters.

The Russian world number two was given his toughest test of this year's tournament by the Czech.

Kafelnikov took the first set of the quarter-final 7-3 on tie-break and fell 3-1 behind in the second before reeling off the next five games to earn his 11th win over Vacek in 15 meetings.

"We both know each other so well and I was pretty confident that I would win the key points," said Kafelnikov.

Kafelnikov, bidding for a third Kremlin Cup success, plays world number 53 Nicolas Escude of France today for a place in the final.

Escude eliminated fifth seed Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine 2-6, 6-3, 6-2.

American Jeff Tarango faces Byron Black of Zimbabwe in the other semifinal. Both are unseeded.

Tarango, who has never gone beyond the second round in five attempts in Moscow, overcame seventh seed Marc Rosset of Switzerland 5-7, 7-6, 6-4.

Twice winner Rosset hit 28 aces in all but wasted four break points in the second set.

Black also earned his first last-four appearance in Moscow by beating Frenchman Fabrice Santoro 6-3, 6-4.

Norman stays on course

STOCKHOLM, Nov 13: Five-time 1999 winner Magnus Norman beat third seed Nicolas Lapentti 6-1, 6-4 Friday night to give Sweden three of the four seed spots at the 800,000-dollar Stockholm Open, reports AFP.

The sixth seeded Scandinavian joined compatriots Thomas Enqvist and Magnus Gustafsson in the final four in one of the last two events prior to the season final in Hanover starting in 10 days.

Norman is five for the most trophies won this season on the ATP Tour and has raised his ranking to a current career-high 19th from 51 at the start of the year.

He now owns a 2-1 lead over world number eight Lapentti, travelling to Germany as one of the elite eight field.

The Ecuadorian who made his breakthrough on indoor courts this autumn with his first match victory (Munich) followed by his first title on the surface (Lyon) was unable to repeat any miracles against the home favourite of 4,500 screaming fans at the Kungliga Hall.

Watching the evening's matches was Bjorn Borg, who sparked the Swedish tennis boom which continues to this day more than 25 years ago.

Earlier, top seed Thomas Enqvist had to battle through against a teenage challenger, finally emerging with a 6-2, 6-7, 6-3 quarterfinal victory over Andreas Vinciguerra.

Viciguerra, the latest young hope to roll off the somewhat depleted Swedish tennis assembly line, saved three match points in the second-set tiebreaker to throw the sellout contest into a deciding set.

Enqvist, the world number seven also going to Hanover, needed an early break in the third to finally ensure victory after more than two hours.

The two-time champion joined compatriot Magnus Gustafsson in the final four after the 32-year-old ousted Jonas Bjorkman 6-4, 0-6, 7-5.

"I had a feeling this would be a tough match," said Enqvist. "I felt it was a good match for both of us. I played a fantastic first set and he came back in the second managing to save three match points."

"I felt I kept the pressure on throughout, but he kept probing me."

Enqvist will next take on Norman, while Gustafsson plays American Jan-Michael Gambill, who ignored minor back pain to notch an upset of seventh seed Mark Philippoussis 4-6, 6-2, 7-5.

"I'm having a great time here," said the 22-year-old North American winner. "I've got some small back and leg problems, but I hope to play through them. Injuries are just a part of the game. I've played almost non-stop since Shanghai (first week of October)."

Gambill, with victories already this season over Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi in the same week last spring on the way to a title in Scottsdale, came within one perfect serve of tying the big-hitting Philippoussis at his own game.

Philippoussis pounded over a dozen aces in his losing effort -- Gambill nearly matched him with 11.

"It's not that surprising," said Gambill. "I'm usually in the top ten on aces. But I was more pleased with my returns. I returned better than him and you need to do that against one of the two biggest servers in the game."

Davenport, playing her first tournament since hurting her right wrist in Hinderstadt a month ago, grabbed the momentum with a service break in the opening game of the second set. She broke again in the fifth en route to taking the set 6-2.

"Getting to a quick start in the second and third helped me a lot. I started to relax more," said Davenport, who didn't drop her serve again.

In the semifinals she'll face third-seeded Venus Williams, who edged France's Sandrine Testud 6-1, 7-6.

"Anyone who loses the first set 6-1, is going to come out strong in the second. Nobody wants to lose that quickly," Williams said. "The points were close but I didn't think I played that well in the tie-breaker. I really wanted to win it because I had such a horrible record this year in tie-breakers."

"She is like a bulldozer. She puts so much pressure on you. The only thing I wanted to do is hang in there. I lost the second set on one point. That's the whole match right there."

Testud said, referring to Williams' miraculous running forehand passing shot for a 5-4 lead in the tiebreaker.

White House official banned

SYDNEY, Nov 13: Animosities between Australian Olympic chiefs and the United States boiled over Saturday when Washington's most powerful anti-drugs campaigner was slapped with a ban from Sydney Games venues, reports AFP.

Australian Olympic Committee president John Coates said General Barry McCaffrey's stance on anti-doping had undermined the authority and role of international and national sporting organisations.

McCaffrey arrives in Sydney on Sunday to attend an international drugs in sport conference and Coates fears he will use it to attack a newly created drugs agency set-up by the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne.

Documents published in The Australian newspaper Saturday show Coates has told Olympic administrators to refuse him access to Sydney Olympic Park for press conferences and tours.

"As far as I'm concerned McCaffrey may be a four star general but he does not even deserve to be in the drugs-in-sports arena," Coates said in a letter to New South Wales Premier Bob Carr.

A separate letter to Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) chief executive Sandy Holloway outlined the plans to bar McCaffrey.

"I have asked David Richmond (Olympic Coordination Authority director) not to allow him access to Sydney Olympic Park for any tours or press conferences, and ask that you not accommodate him at SOCOG in any way."

The summit brings together government ministers from 26 countries, including Europe, North and South America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Representatives from the IOC and international sports federations will also attend.

The aim is to produce a framework for anti-doping programmes and sanctions and Coates' open hostility is certain to embarrass Prime Minister John Howard, in Durban for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

It was Howard who invited the American to the conference. McCaffrey is the director of the White House Office of National Drug Control and is often referred to as Bill Clinton's drugs tsar.

He said establishing the IOC agency was a major step towards a uniform anti-doping regime that would apply equally to all athletes regardless of their nationality or sport.

"It's clear General McCaffrey intends to establish his regime in disregard of the authority and role of international and national sporting organisations," he said.

SOCOG Saturday attempted to distance itself from Coates' position.

"It's got nothing to do with us, it's a letter from John Coates as president of the AOC," a SOCOG spokesman said, but rejected suggestions the ban was heavy-handed and over-reactive.

He said people needed to understand the difference of opinion between Coates and McCaffrey over who should control drug testing in sport.

"The responsibility of detecting and excluding drug cheats should be left to sports. General McCaffrey says the US government should control it," the spokesman said.

"Why would he (Coates) support General McCaffrey's plan or proposal when the IOC is the world anti-doping authority?"

The World Anti-Doping Agency officially came into existence last week with its provisional headquarters established in Switzerland.

It will include 16 Olympic movement representatives and 16 government representatives.

Bremen's sporting director Klaus Allofs has reportedly informed Peruvian officials that the player has a knee injury and therefore did not intend to release him.

Peru seeks FIFA's help

LIMA, Nov 13: The Peruvian Football Federation on Friday asked FIFA to lean on German side Werder Bremen to ensure the release of international striker Claudio Pizarro for a friendly next week against Slovakia, reports AFP.

The Federation's general secretary, Javier Quintana, said he intended to issue a warning to the Germans to prevent them fielding Pizarro unless they released him 48 hours before the match.

Bremen's sporting director Klaus Allofs has reportedly informed Peruvian officials that the player has a knee injury and therefore did not intend to release him.

Anelka unfit

MADRID, Nov 13: Real Madrid have told France that their striker Nicolas Anelka will not be fit to play in Sunday's European under-21 championship match against Italy, reports Reuters.

Anelka, who is recovering from a knee injury, had been due to join the French squad in Clairfontaine on Friday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. A crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 27 mins and a cryptic clue: 'Today's Cryptic clue: T equals B'.

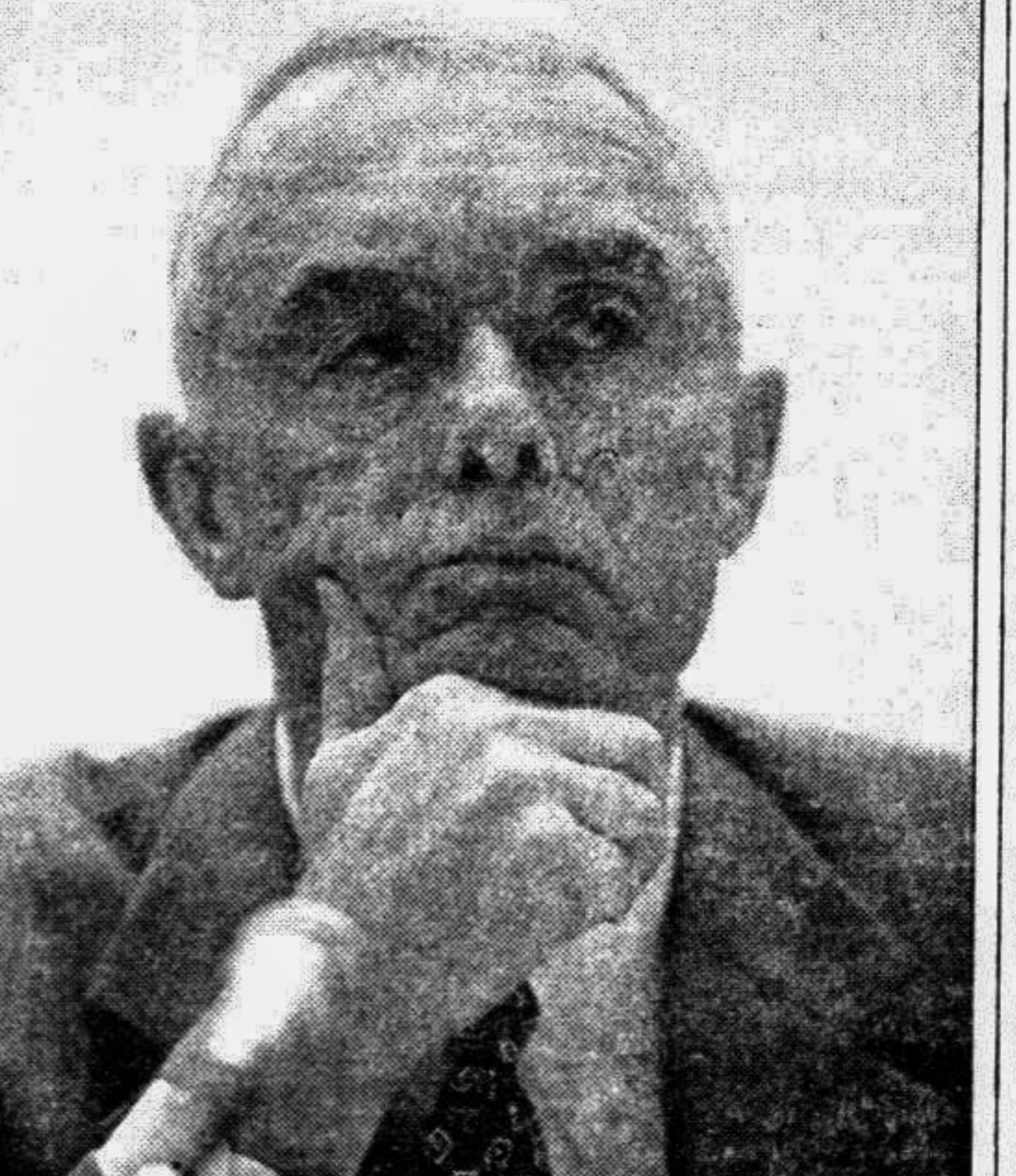
Nigeria names new coach tomorrow

LAGOS, Nov 13: The Nigeria Football Association (NFA) will on Monday decide on a new foreign coach for the national team ahead of next year's African Nations Cup which Nigeria is co-hosting with Ghana, reports AFP.

"An emergency board meeting has been called for Monday. The meeting will finally decide on who will handle the Super Eagles," an NFA official said.

He said the disagreements over who to pick between two Dutchmen who had handled the team in the past will be resolved at the meeting.

The two Dutchmen are Jo Bonfere and Clemens Westerhof.



An AFP file photo of American retired general Barry McCaffrey.