

Hants plan Marshall gates

HAMPSHIRE, Nov 15 (Internet report): Hampshire are planning to honour West Indian fast bowler legend Malcolm Marshall by naming a set of memorial gates at their £18m new ground at the start of the 2001 season.

'Sixth Test' for England?

BLOEMFONTEIN, Nov 15 (Internet report): After two soft opening first class touches, Nassar Hussain's touring England cricket side are suddenly going to find themselves in what could virtually be classified as a 'sixth Test' at Centurion Park next weekend.

The Gauteng/Northern side which was named on Sunday is a close to the real thing as one can get. So much so that the squad had to get board approval before being announced.

And although an all-white combination it was finally given the green light. An unexpected stance which is bound to raise eyebrows and a few hackles, but on Sunday night the United Cricket Board confirmed that they had given the provincial selectors the go-ahead, albeit reluctantly.

In a brief statement Board managing director Ali Bacher said: "It was reluctantly agreed, after consultation with our president Ray White, vice-president Percy Sonn, treasurer John Blair and Gauteng president Gerald Ritchie, that it would have been unfair to have kept out of a very strong, near international combined side either a nationally contracted player like Derek Crooks or a recent SA 'A' representative in Sven Koenig to conform to the UCB's provincial policy that all provincial teams must be teams of colour.

The UCB's provincial policy remains in force." As it is Crooks still failed to make the cut, with the spinner's berth going to Gauteng's Clive Eksteen, who will also captain the side which boasts further internationals in Adam Bacher, Daryl Cullinan, Steve Elworthy and David Terbrugge. For England, currently riding high against a depleted Free State/Griquas XI in Bloemfontein, it's a case of going from the sublime to the ridiculous and they couldn't be blamed for thinking they have been deliberately thrown to the wolves on the eve of the first Test.

The star studded line-up is: Sven Koenig, Adam Bacher, Neil McKenzie, Daryl Cullinan, Martin van Jaarsveld, Nic Potas, Steve Elworthy, Clive Eksteen (capt), David Townsend, David Terbrugge, Greg Smith.

SA A bring in changes

HARARE, Nov 15 (Internet report): The national selectors on Sunday made three changes to the South Africa 'A' cricket team to play Sri Lanka 'A' in their second four-day match in Pietermaritzburg, starting on Thursday.

In are Arno Jacobs (North West), Justin Kemp (Eastern Province) and Wendell Bossenger (Griquas), replacing Neil McKenzie, David Terbrugge and Nic Potas, who instead will beef up the Combined Northerns-Gauteng XI to play England at the weekend ahead of the first Test in Johannesburg, starting November 25.

Stockholm Open Enqvist's

STOCKHOLM, Nov 15: Swede Thomas Enqvist claimed another confidence-building title at home Sunday, beating compatriot Magnus Gustafson 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 to win the 800,000-dollar Stockholm Open for the third time in five years, reports AFP.

Enqvist, the top seed and world number seven, takes a major dose of confidence into the season-ending eight-man World Championship in Hanover beginning a week from Tuesday in Germany.

"I'm very happy with my game today," said the 25-year-old Stockholm native, playing at his home club, the Royal. "I felt focused the whole time." "My tactics of staying tough mentally and staying in control worked well for me."

IBF pulls a fast one on Lewis

LAS VEGAS, Nevada, Nov 15 (AFP): The clearest sign that Lennox Lewis reigns supreme as boxing's undisputed heavyweight king was a pathetic bid by Don King and a sanctioning body to undermine the British hero's crown.

But the King is dead. Long live the king. Lewis won a unanimous 12-round decision over Evander Holyfield here Saturday that gave him three world titles and effectively spelled the end of promoter King as a dominant factor in the lucrative heavyweight realm.

Or so everyone thought. But the International Boxing Federation, whose leaders face federal charges of accepting bribes to manipulate rankings, broke a sanction payment deal from Lewis seconds before the fight began.

The Lewis camp paid its 300,000-dollar sanctioning fee into an escrow account rather than to the indicted IBF run by president Bob Lee or a new non-profit IBF created last week in response to the indictments. The pact would have seen the money revert back to the Lewis camp if the mess were not settled within 45 days.

The IBF had agreed but Walter Stone, the IBF supervisor in attendance, refused to sign the contract, took the IBF belt Holyfield carried into the ring and departed, saying the IBF title was considered vacant. "If they don't recognize Lennox, I don't think we want to recognize the IBF," Lewis promoter Panos Eliades said. "It doesn't surprise me with the people involved. Until these people are put out of boxing or shot, this will keep happening."

"We're undisputed champions. It's Bob Lee, who is under indictment, that backed out at the last minute. This could be the end of the IBF. It could be destroyed by this move. They will lose any credibility."

Le DiBella, an executive with US boxing financier and broadcaster HBO, made clear his contempt for the IBF. "There's a reason they are in trouble and they keep showing why they are in trouble," DiBella said. "What this tells me is we shouldn't be paying any attention to the IBF."

King entered the picture at a post-fight news conference, denigrating the IBF and denying any part in the de-unification mess yet being the only one who might profit from it. As Eliades and attorney Pat English tried to explain the mess, King brayed on. "What you guys did was wrong," King said. "You took the law into your own hands. I'm defending the American way. You shouldn't attack them when they aren't here to defend themselves."

"It's easy to know why it was revoked and you didn't pay. You should have paid them the money."

With Holyfield's loss, King lost control of a division he

ruled three years ago, owning two major titles and the biggest draw in Mike Tyson. Unlike many of his fight deals, King had no clause in this contract that assured him rights to promote the victor's next fight regardless of who wins, a clause that ensures King wins no matter which fighter falls.

The IBF's tainted title lacks any respect unless Lewis holds it. Keeping it vacant lets King match two lesser fighters, in a farcical charade between jesters pretending to be emperors, for a sham crown.

King cackled at English's explanation of how the IBF's legal troubles forced the Lewis camp into the escrow idea to ensure the money would go to which group emerged from the fight to run the troubled sanctioners. English fired back, "Have you thought of hiring yourself out as a laugh track?"

Lewis had ripped the IBF earlier in the week, saying he was told Lee was determined to have Holyfield as champion after their first fight. He decried IBF corruption and noted that judge Eugenia Williams, whose shock decision in favor of Holyfield produced the draw, was appointed by the IBF.

In the wake of that, the IBF move smacked of payback. "It was all a shock to us," Lewis manager Frank Maloney said. "We didn't have time to consider what happened with what was going on in the ring. It's quite a complicated legal issue. We'll get it all sorted out next week."

King's sorting out will take considerably longer. He faces a lawsuit from Mike Tyson and the likely quick passage of a federal boxing reform law aimed at many of the practices common in his deals with fighters. King was booed long and lustily here Saturday, with British fans leading an anti-King chant. But he still promotes unbeaten Felix Trinidad and many other champions below the heavyweight level.

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Ottey clean

KINGSTON, Jamaica, Nov 15: An appeals panel has cleared Jamaican athlete Merlene Ottey of doping. Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association President Adrian Wallace said Saturday, reports AFP.

Wallace, speaking on the "Sportszone" programme on R/R 94, said he did not yet have the details of the panel's findings, but that he was informed Saturday that the eight-member group found in Ottey's favour.

The panel has made a decision that Merlene Ottey is not guilty of a doping offence. Wallace said. The JAAA will have a meeting after the events of the hearing have been put in writing, which I will present to the JAAA, and the JAAA will then pass it on to the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF).

The important thing is going to be how the panel came to their decision. We're sure the IAAF is going to want to know the details of how they came to their decision, and that is why the panel is going to meet again just to put it on paper, to summarise their findings.

Ottey, 39, returned a positive test for nandrolone at a meeting on July 5 at Lucerne, Switzerland. She quit August's world championships in Seville, Spain, after news of the positive test became public. She vowed there had been a "terrible mistake" and pledged to clear her name.

On September 15, the JAAA said that the 'B' sample of Ottey's test was also positive. Ottey ran her first Olympics in 1980 in Moscow and in 1983 began her record haul of world championship medals by taking silver in the 200m.

Since 1983 she has amassed 14 World Championship medals, including two golds - four more than American legend Carl Lewis. Ottey's positive test came less than a month after Britain's former Olympic 100m champion Linford Christie tested positive for the same drug.

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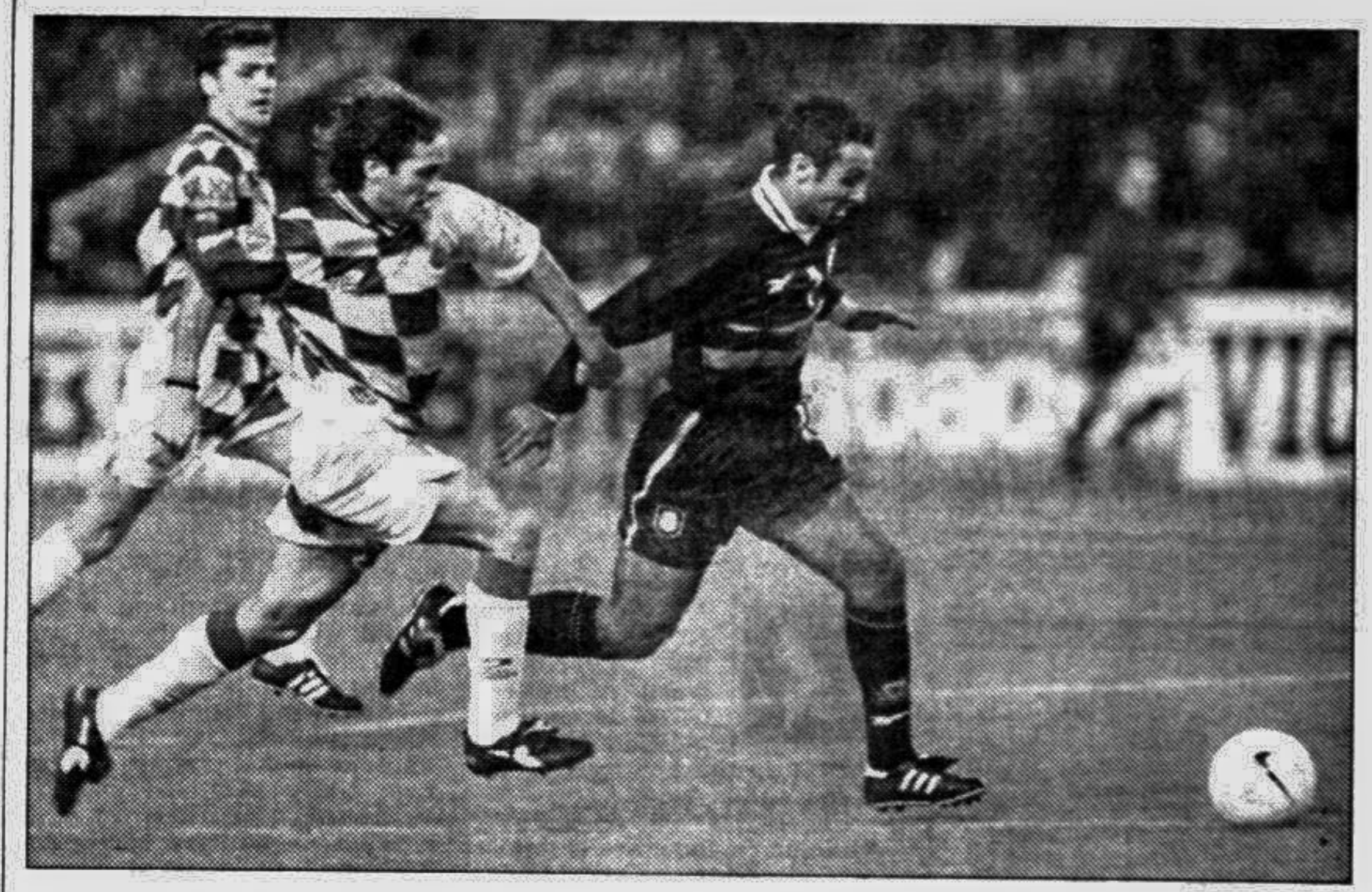
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Gustavo Lopez (R) of Argentina breaking free from Espanyol defender Navas (C) during an exhibition match marking the Spanish club's centenary at Barcelona on November 14. —AFP photo

Opinion poll on match of the Millennium MU's triumph tops the list

LONDON, Nov 15: Readers of British soccer magazine Shoot have voted Manchester United's Champions League defeat of Bayern Munich last May as the match of the Millennium, reports AFP.

England's World Cup triumph in 1966 was forced into second place by United's last-gasp success, when Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer scored in stoppage time to clinch a 2-1 win.

The poll was dominated by the Old Trafford club, reflecting their enormous fan base. In third place was United's FA Cup semi-final defeat of Arsenal last April - when Ryan Giggs scored a wonderful solo winner - and fifth spot was occupied by their comeback victory over Juventus in the Champions League in the same month.

They are separated by England's epic World Cup second-round tie with Argentina at France 98, when Glenn Hoddle's men lost on penalties after holding on for a draw despite playing well over an hour with 10 men following David Beckham's sending off.

The most surprising inclusion comes in 18th - Tranmere's 5-1 League Cup demolition of Coventry just two months ago, one place below France's 3-0 win over Brazil in last year's World Cup final.

The highest ranked match involving non-British sides was Real Madrid's 7-3 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt in the 1960 European Cup final at number six.

Shoot editor Andy Winter admitted: "The Top 20 really shows the two teams that most people are interested in are Manchester United and England."

SHOOT'S TOP 20 MATCHES OF THE MILLENNIUM ARE

- 1. Man Utd 2 Bayern Munich 1 (1999 Champions League final)
2. England 4 West Germany 2 (1966 World Cup final)
3. Man Utd 2 Arsenal 1 (1999 FA Cup semi-final replay)
4. England 2 Argentina 2 (1998 World Cup second round)
5. Juventus 2 Man Utd 3 (1999 Champions League semi-final second leg)
6. Real Madrid 7 Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (1960 European Cup final)
7. England 4 Holland 1 (1996 European Championship)
8. Liverpool 0 Arsenal 2 (1989 Division One title decider)
9. England 2 Scotland 0 (1996 European Championship)
10. Brazil 4 Italy 1 (1970 World Cup final)
11. Chelsea 5 Man Utd 0 (1999 Premiership match)
12. Liverpool 4 Newcastle 3 (1997 Premiership match)
13. Republic of Ireland 1 Italy 0 (1998 World Cup group match)
14. Man Utd 4 Benfica 1 (1968 European Cup final)
15. Charlton 4 Sunderland 4 (1998 Division One play-off final)
16. England 3 Hungary 6 (1953 international friendly)
17. France 3 Brazil 0 (1998 World Cup final)
18. Tranmere 5 Coventry 1 (1999 League Cup second round first leg)
19. Newcastle 5 Man Utd 0 (1996 Premiership match)
20. Holland 2 Argentina 1 (1998 World Cup quarter-final).

Zoff keeps his ears plugged

MILAN, Nov 15: Italy coach Dino Zoff had his umbrella up on Monday as criticism continued to rain down on him after last weekend's latest humiliation before the home fans, reports AFP.

Two months after Italy were deservedly beaten 3-2 by Denmark in Naples, another sloppy performance at both ends of the field on Saturday night saw them slump to a 3-1 defeat to Belgium.

A hostile press pointed out that Italy had only won one of their last seven games under Zoff's management and that the last four had finished in two defeats and two draws.

They also hammered home the point that neither Denmark nor Belgium had any star players on a par with Italy's, yet both were more convincing as a team than their illustrious hosts.

But Zoff simply brushed off the criticism, saying he wasn't worried and that everything could be sorted out by the Euro 2000 kick-off in June.

"We've got time to recover lost ground and to solve our problems," he said.

"The negative results we've had recently haven't been caused by a particular system of play, but by some starting mistakes, made both in defence and in attack, and a set of circumstances which went against us."

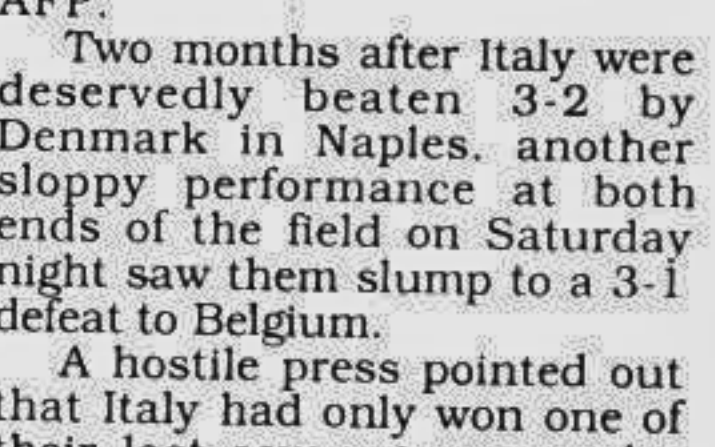
Part of the search will be devoted to tactics. Zoff has a religious faith in 4-4-2 football, but the recent string of disappointing results prompted him to try a 3-4-3 format against Belgium in the hope of finding that missing sparkle.

The experiment failed, although the three defensive lapses which cost Italy defeat -- all down to slack marking -- could have occurred with any line-up.

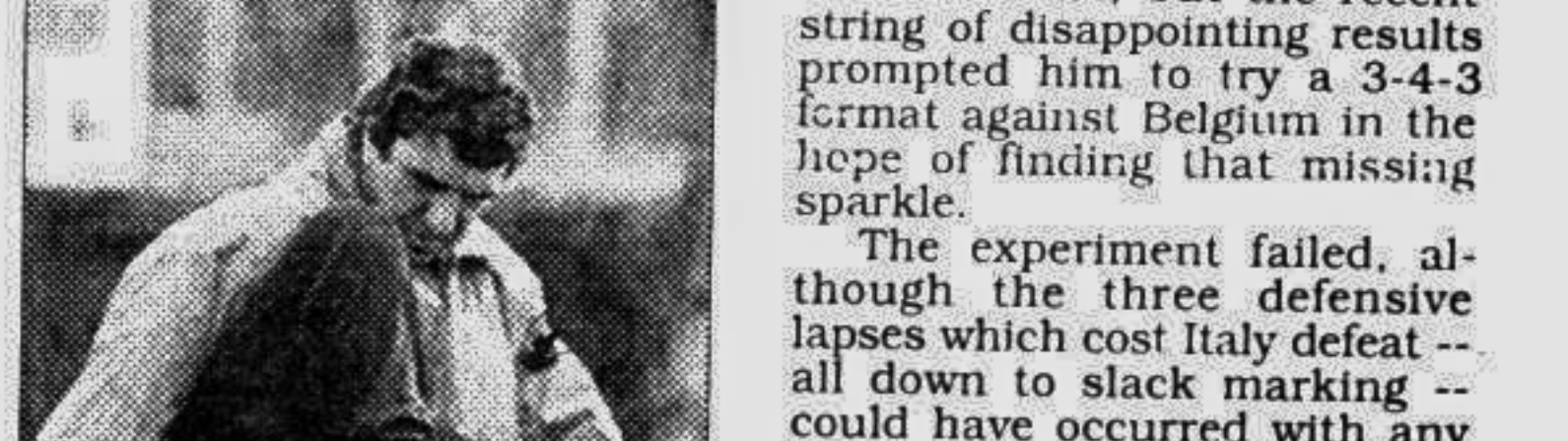
Zoff will probably try the experiment again in February against Sweden, but revert to a 4-4-2 line-up against Spain in March.

His other job will be to monitor the form guide a bit more closely. Italian papers claim that big names such as Alessandro Del Piero will need hit form in the months ahead if they are to make the Euro 2000 squad.

Zoff hinted as much when the dour 57-year-old said: "I will be following the championship closely and the indications it provides."



DINO ZOFF



Zoff accepted that things aren't going smoothly for the nation who reached the World Cup final only five years ago. "If we've lost the last two home matches, there must be problems," he admitted. "But I'm not too worried. With six months' work, we can solve them all by finding the right remedies."

Davenport downs Hingis

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania, Nov 15: Second-seeded American Lindsay Davenport upset top-seeded Martina Hingis of Switzerland 6-3, 6-4 here Sunday to capture the Advanta Championship -- her sixth WTA Tour title of the year, reports AFP.

Hingis, the world number one whose Australian Open triumph in January was her only Grand Slam title of the season, saved one match point in the 10th game with a service winner.

Davenport got a second chance to close it out but she hit an easy backhand return wide on a Hingis second serve.

Davenport finally nailed a backhand crosscourt winner on her third match point.

"It's just great to beat Martina and Venus in the same tournament and finish the year on such a high note," said Davenport, who ousted third-seeded Venus Williams in the semifinals.

her break right back on a forehand return down the line to even it at 1-1. Hingis's marshmallow serve gave Davenport, runner-up in Philadelphia for the past two years, ample opportunities to blast winners and break at will, which she did

in the fifth and ninth games to clinch the first set 6-3. Davenport, 23, held to open the second set, but Hingis fought off two break points in the second game to hold serve as she finally cut down on her mistakes.



Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov shows off the Kremlin Cup in Moscow on November 14. —AFP photo

Proud British media

LONDON, Nov 15 (AFP/AP): The British press enthusiastically hailed new world heavyweight boxing champion Lennox Lewis on Monday but lamented the row which denied him the title of undisputed champion after his defeat of American Evander Holyfield in Las Vegas.

Pictures of Lewis celebrating his unanimous points decision made front page news on several papers, though the International Boxing Federation's decision subsequently to withhold its belt -- one of three on offer -- over a payment technicality was widely condemned.

The Guardian's sports section ran with the headline: "At 5.35am GMT yesterday Lennox Lewis thought he was the undisputed champion of the world... Minutes later the dispute resumed."

"Lewis ascends to peak without hitting the heights" was The Times' verdict, a reference to the dull nature of the fight. The broadsheet did, however, welcome the "shift in the power base of boxing" across the Atlantic to Britain for the first time.

The Daily Mail drew a parallel with England's victory over Scotland in the first leg of their Euro 2000 soccer play-off on Saturday, said: "We can produce winners, not just gallant losers."

Its back page, though, roared "Farce" in reference to the IBF decision to withhold its belt.

The Mirror tabloid spoke of the pride of Lewis' mother Violet at her son's achievement, its front page carrying a picture of her planting a huge smacker on the champion's cheek.

"Lennox Lewis is a very special heavyweight champ, thoughtful, caring and dignified. He has brought nothing but honour to his sport and his country," said its editorial.

Its rival The Sun also paid tribute to Lewis' personal conduct, describing him as the "gentle giant who rules the world."

"But time too" added the tabloid in its editorial. "It has been a long wait," it said, mindful of the fact that Britain's last undisputed heavy champion was Bob Fitzsimmons, 102 years ago.

But Daily Telegraph columnist Sue Mott considered the home reaction to the victory lukewarm.

She said the lack of interest is aimed at the sport as a whole. Boxing has been hit recently by a wave of corruption scandals.

"He's just a victim of boxing's terminal decline," she said. "Boxing came with primordial clout," she wrote. "It seemed to be sport stripped of its cleanest, barest bones. Well, not now. Boxing is utterly defiled."

Poor Lennox Lewis... is merely king of a heavyweight derision," she writes

Chase Championships on

NEW YORK, Nov 15 (AP): Martina Hingis enters this week's Chase Championships as the defending champion. She's also on a two-tournament losing streak and intent on changing things.

You want to end up the season with a victory," she said of the 2-million dollar tournament that begins Monday at Madison Square Garden.

Hingis is ranked No 1 and will be top-seeded in the elite 16-player field. Lindsay Davenport, seeded No 2, lost to Hingis in this event last year but beat the Swiss teen-ager 6-3, 6-4 Sunday to capture the Advanta Championships in Philadelphia.

Hingis also lost the final in Zurich, Switzerland, to Venus Williams, one of four players making their debut in the season-ending showcase. The others are the younger Williams sister, Serena, along with Amelie Mauresmo of France and Barbara Schett of Austria.

Three of the sport's biggest stars of recent years, however, will be missing.

Steffi Graf, who won the title five times, has retired and will be honoured by Madison Square Garden and the WTA Tour on Tuesday night. Graf, who won the French Open and reached the final at Wimbledon, qualified for this year's tournament.

"It's going to be both a happy and a sad occasion," said Graf, who won 22 Grand Slam tournament titles. "New York and Madison Square Garden have

always been very special to me and I'm looking forward to coming back."

The ceremony will be held after the first singles match of the evening. Steffi's retirement never gave her fans a chance to say goodbye," said Jim Fuhse, WTA Tour director of promotions. "Tuesday will give them their chance."

Two other former Garden champions who played during the year will not be in the field. Jana Novotna, the 1997 winner, joined Graf in retirement, while three-time winner Monica Seles, who qualified, has a stress fracture in her right foot.

Schett, seeded seventh, will play the opening match Monday evening, facing Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain. Then, No. 5 Mary Pierce, one of five French players in the field, takes on Anna Kournikova of Russia.

Hingis opens her defence Tuesday against Sandrine Testud of France. She could use the Garden Court to get back at Davenport.

Coming off a dominating performance in the semifinals against Venus Williams, Davenport used a big serve and booming baseline strokes to win her first Advanta title after finishing runner-up the past

two years. This was the second WTA Tour match this year between Hingis and Davenport, and Davenport has won both. "They also met in the Hopman Cup in January, with Hingis winning."

Davenport heads to New York with lots of momentum. Yet the reigning Wimbledon champion has been sidelined with an aching left wrist, an injury that apparently bothered her enough to force her withdrawal from the doubles semifinals in Philadelphia.

On Tuesday, sixth-seeded Nathalie Tauziat of France plays Amanda Coetzer of South Africa in the morning and No. 4 Serena Williams meets Dominique Van Roost of Belgium just before the Graf ceremony.

The first round will be completed on Wednesday, with No 8 Julie Halard-Decugis of France against Anke Huber of Germany in a morning match. The night programme begins with Davenport-Mauresmo and winds up with third-seeded Venus Williams against Conchita Martinez.

The quarterfinals are Thursday and Friday, with the semifinals Saturday afternoon. The best-of-3-sets final, a change from the best-of-5-sets played in past years, is Sunday.



WBA superlightweight champion Sharmba Mitchell of the United States (R) lands a right on challenger Elio Ortiz of Venezuela during their title bout at Thomas and Mack Centre in Las Vegas on November 13. Mitchell won the 12-round fight. —AFP photo

WTA rankings