

Mick pulls for Bobby

LONDON, Jan 1: Bobby Robson was Friday handed a boost in his efforts to secure a new contract in charge at Newcastle when the Magpies' head coach Mick Wadsworth praised the "magnificent" work the former England boss had undertaken so far, reports AFP.

Ronaldo's request

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 1: Inter Milan and Brazil star Ronaldo made a New Year plea to fans on Friday as he looks to recover his fitness in 2000, asking them to be patient and realise that "I am not a robot," reports AFP.



RONALDO

baller's car when he makes a mistake," added Ronaldo, who at least has the consolation of having just got married on Christmas Eve to Milene Domingues.

Hopman Cup underway

PERTH, Jan 1: The first professional tennis tournament of the new millennium, the Hopman Cup mixed team challenge, could see a rematch of last year's battling Wimbledon Qualifiers, Alexandra Stevenson and Jelena Dokic, reports Reuters.



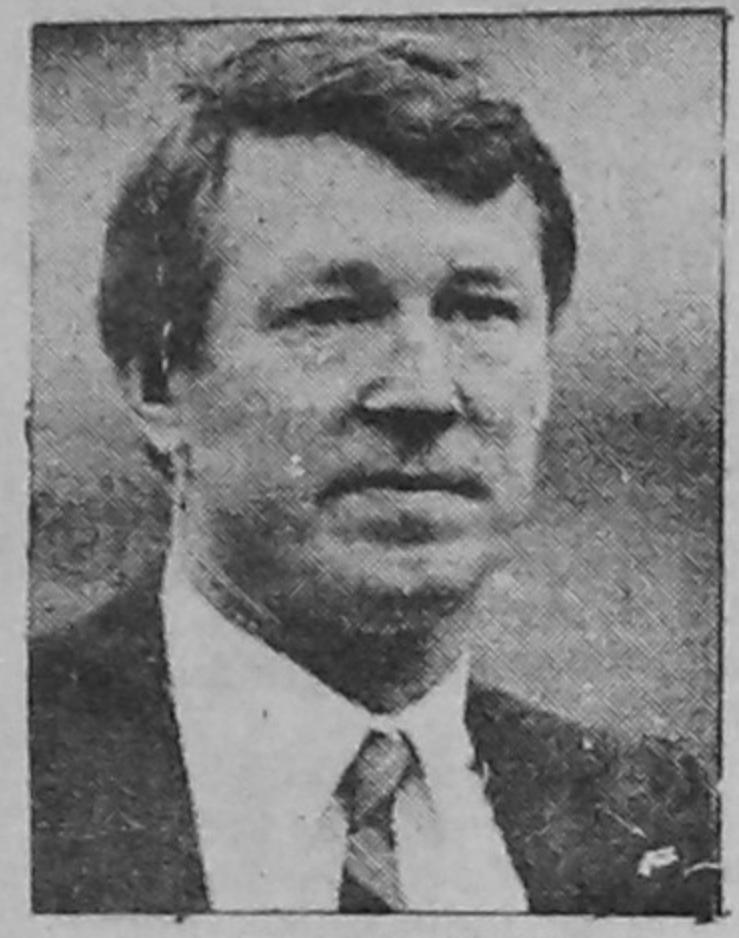
Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn makes a forehand return during a Hopman Cup qualifying round match against Japan's Ai Sugiyama in Perth yesterday. Tanasugarn won 6-1, 6-3. —AFP photo

Penarol pay the price

ASUNCION, Jan 1: Uruguayan champions Penarol, involved in a mass brawl after a match earlier this month, had 10 players banned on Thursday for fighting, reports Reuters.

Alex's cause for concern

MANCHESTER, Jan 1: Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson is adamant his treble winners will not wilt in the withering heat of Brazil when they compete in the World Club Championship, reports AFP.



SIR ALEX FERGUSON

they're going to handle the games, recovering and then playing again two days later." Ferguson has experienced managing a team in extremely hot conditions before from the

Swede boss' suggestion

STOCKHOLM, Jan 1: Swedish Sports Minister Ulrica Messing suggested Thursday that her country provide a permanent home for the newly inaugurated World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in Lausanne, Switzerland, reports Xinhua.

Nagoya lift Emperor's Cup

TOKYO, Jan 1: Brazilian-born Wagner Lopes and Dragan Stojkovic of Yugoslavia were the scorers as Nagoya Grampus Eight beat Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2-0 Saturday and won the Emperor's Cup, an annual five-week contest among Japan's 80 top soccer teams, reports AP.

Hiroshima, striving for the team's first-ever Emperor's Cup, fought back aggressively but failed to penetrate Nagoya's defence, spearheaded by Brazilian defender Torres and solid goalkeeper by Japanese international Seigo Narazaki.

Joao Carlos took the job early in September after Nagoya finished in an unimpressive eighth place in the J-League's first stage.

Gold Coast tennis starts today

GOLD COAST, Australia, Jan 1: Russian star Anna Kournikova will attract the crowds but French top seed Julie Halard-Decugis will start favourite in the Australian women's hardcourt tennis tournament, reports AP.

Selectors no-balled again over all-white team

By Mohammed Allie from Cape Town, South Africa

South Africa sports minister Ngeonde Balfour has warned cricket chiefs that there must be no repeat of the controversy that erupted after the selection of an all-white provincial team to play England in November.

Although apartheid was officially buried nearly six years ago, race controversies continue to pervade South Africa. In a sports-mad country, the racial composition of representative teams has had the uncanny knack of resurfacing like a hardy weed.

Despite all the praise heaped on a cricket development programme in which black youngsters have been introduced to the game across the country, some administrators within the sport have also bowled a few silly no-balls to punctuate the sport's progress.

indication of the progress which has been made in cricket's transformation. The intensity of the protest showed that white administrators can no longer get away with such acts without being called to account," he says.

Tiger gets birthday blues

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Jan 1 (Internet report): Golf got the better of Tiger Woods on his birthday.

Kournikova's new friend

MOSCOW, Jan 1 Russian tennis sweetheart Anna Kournikova has left one ice hockey player for another, local sports newspapers said, reports Reuters.

CROSSWORD

A crossword puzzle grid with clues for 1-11 across and 1-11 down. The clues include: 1 Name-sakes of a Nabokov novel, 5 Norm (abbr.), 8 Mideast potentate, 12 Litter's littlest, 13 "... — a puddlyat!", 14 Lawless character, 15 Louisiana town, 17 On, 18 Blot on one's escutcheon, 19 Slot machine trio, 21 Nosh, 22 Manuscript glitch, 23 Tod on "Cheers", 26 Sister, 28 The 400, 31 Help a hood, 33 Ran into, 35 Unsettled donkey, 36 "Love me (not)" determin-

A cryptic crossword puzzle titled 'CRYPTOQUIP'. It features a grid and clues for 1-11 across and 1-11 down. The clues include: 1 ICM'G YPMD GBZG, 2 GBP YFJZVWPPZQEP, 3 HZJJPSW WPZED WSQQPY, 4 HP GBP IWC MV IZD, 5 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A GOOD ENGLISH TEACHER CAN NO DOUBT KEEP THE KIDS IN HER CLASS SPELL-BOUND. Today's Cryptoquip clue: G equals T.