

English Div. One
Hunt hatrick takes
Charlton four
points clear

LONDON, Jan 23: Charlton went four points clear at the top of Division One on Saturday with Andy Hunt scoring a hat-trick to haunt his old club Norwich at Carrow Road, reports AFP.

Hunt scored in the 42nd, 73rd and 78th minutes to reach 14 goals this season and give a massive boost to Alan Curbishley's hopes of leading the London club back into the Premiership.

Their cause was bolstered by Manchester City's 1-0 defeat to Sheffield United at Bramall Lane.

It was another case of revenge as Michael Brown grabbed the winner against the club who sold him.

Barnsley made up ground in emphatic fashion by smashing Blackburn's recent good run at Oakwell.

Barnsley coasted into a 4-1 at half-time lead through Bruce Dyer, Craig Hignett, Darren Bamard and Neil Shipperley.

Rovers' solitary reply came from Per Frandsen but there was no joy for them after the break with Dyer hitting his second on 72 minutes to complete the rout.

Huddersfield moved back on the right track with Marcus Stewart netting in the 13th minute to bring a 1-0 win over Tranmere.

Ipswich were held at Bolton who led through Dean Holdsworth's 65th minute strike before Matt Holland grabbed a point five minutes from time.

Wolves were three up inside half an hour against Queen's Park Rangers through Steve Sedgley, Michael Branch and Ade Akinbiyi.

But Wolves eased up in the second half allowing Rangers to come back with late goals from Gavin Peacock and Steve Slade but the Midlands held on for a 3-2 win.

Walsall pulled off their third away win of the season with a thrilling 3-2 win at Crewe.

Fulham's challenge for a play off place took another blow when Jack Lester's 56th minute goal gave Grimsby a 1-0 success at Craven Cottage, only their second away win of the season.

Birmingham came unstuck at Port Vale, going down 3-1. Tony Naylor gave Vale the lead in the 14th minute but Bryan Hughes equalised three minutes after the break.

Vale stormed grabbed the points with two goals in the last four minutes, through Tommy Widdrington's penalty and Tony Rougier.

Tony Dinning gave Stockport the lead with a 14th minute penalty at home to Portsmouth but the points were shared when Ceri Hughes levelled in the 44th minute for the visitors.

Nottingham Forest managed to keep a clean sheet but that was their only consolation in a drab 0-0 draw with West Bromwich Albion.

Sampras, Agassi in qtrs



MELBOURNE, Jan 23: American men dominated the Australian Open on Sunday, reports AP.

Andre Agassi, Pete Sampras and a surprising Chris Woodruff reached the men's quarterfinals.

Agassi's cunning and consistency overwhelmed Mark Philippoussis' brute power so thoroughly that the frustrated Australian smashed his racket into the shape of a gnarled zucchini.

In long rallies that perfectly suited his style, the top-seeded Agassi repeatedly painted Philippoussis into a corner then put him away to craft a 6-4, 7-6, 5-7, 6-3 victory and reach the quarterfinals.

Sampras cruised through the first two sets, then overcame a complacent third set to beat Slava Dosedel 6-1, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 and set up a quarterfinal match against Woodruff, who upset No. 11 Tim Henman 7-5, 1-6, 6-4, 3-6, 7-5.

Woodruff, a 27-year-old former national collegiate champion who had never gone beyond the third round in a major, ended 1999 ranked No. 51, a leap from No. 1,342 the previous year. It was the biggest jump on the ATP Tour rankings last year. In 1998, he played only one tournament after sustaining a left knee injury in December 1997 while kicking field goals with Richey Reneberg. At the time of the injury, Woodruff was ranked No. 30.

Agassi patiently absorbed Philippoussis' 25 aces and waited for chances to attack. Agassi broke Philippoussis' serve only once in the first set, and that was enough. In the second set, neither player yielded on serve, producing a tie-breaker of high drama.

After losing his opening service, Philippoussis swept the next four points, the last with his 18th ace, to put himself in position to tie the match. But Agassi calmly kept up the pressure from the baseline and won the next six points to take the set and spark a moment of rage from Philippoussis.

The 193-centimetre (6-foot-4) Australian bellowed in disgust and smacked his racket hard against the court, then kicked the misshapen weapon away.

"I had to let some frustration out or else I'd kill someone. Better to do it with the racket," Philippoussis said.

Said Agassi: "I'm just thinking I'm glad I'm not the racket."

Philippoussis regained his composure enough to win the third set when he broke Agassi twice, but was helpless as Agassi again drew him into rally mode in the fourth.

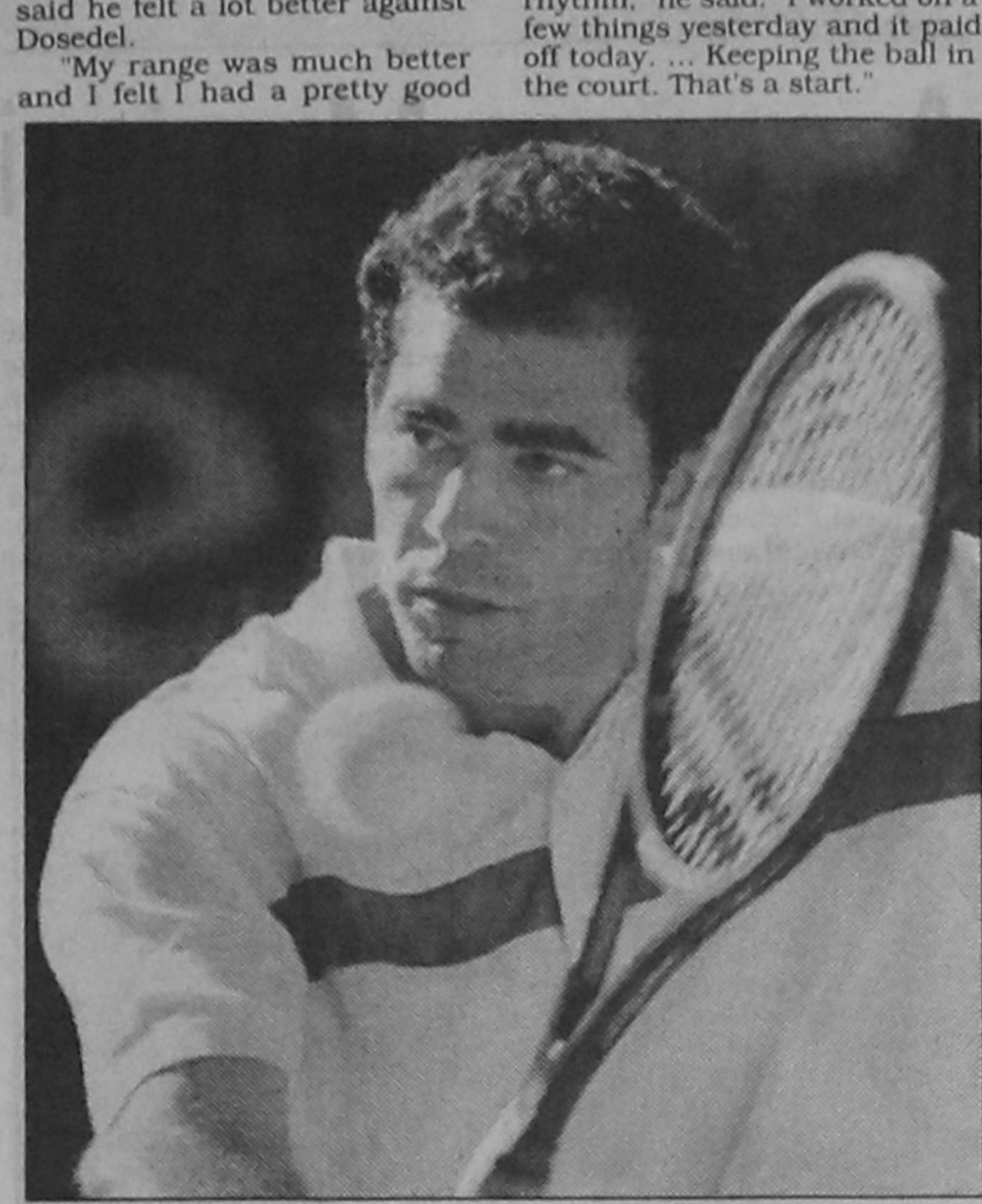
Agassi served just eight aces in the match, but committed only 25 unforced errors to Philippoussis' 55.

Next up for Agassi is Morocco's Hiram Arazzi, a 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 victor over Nicolas Escude.

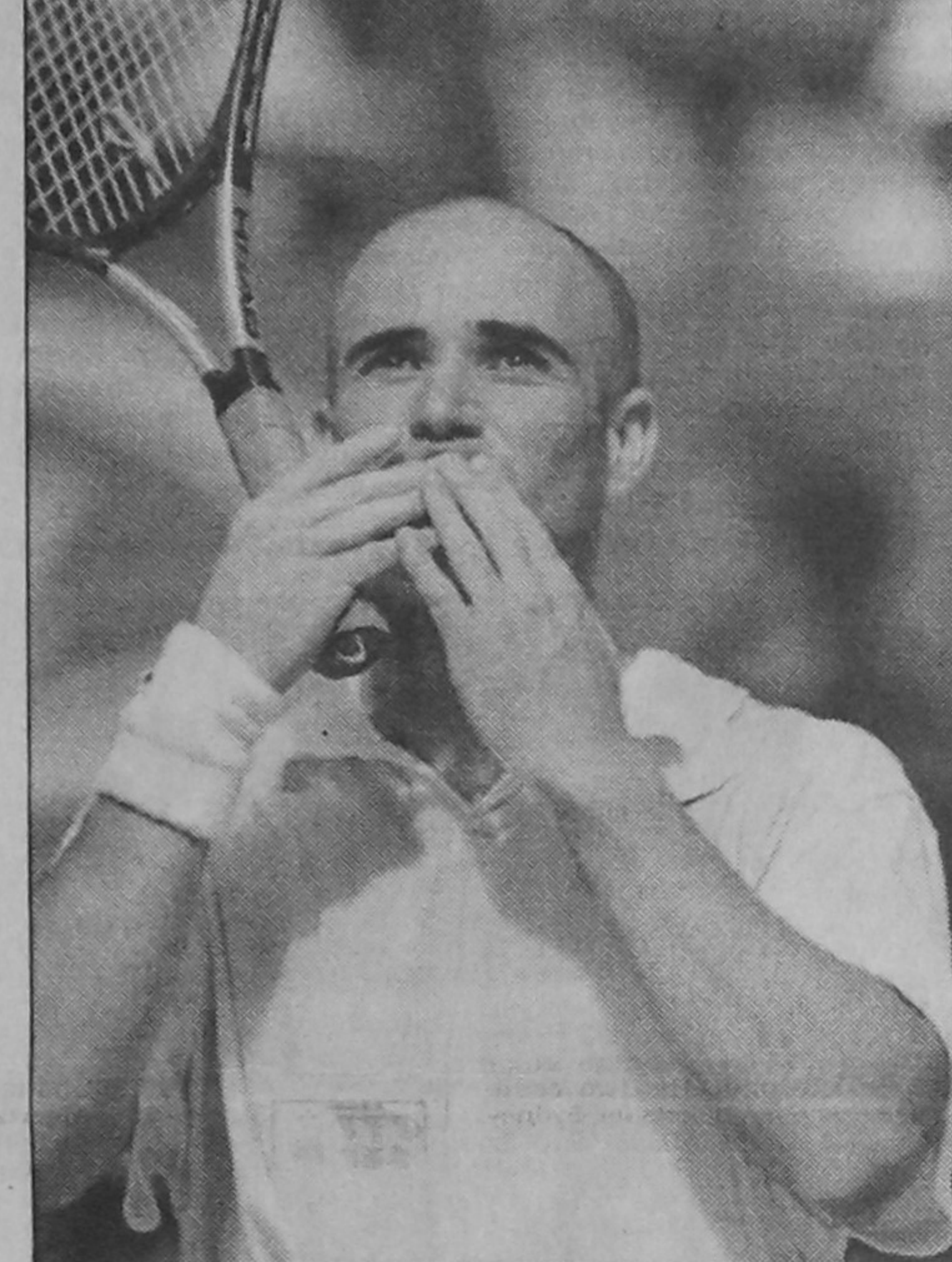
Sampras, who had to come back from two sets down against Zimbabwe's Wayne Black in his previous match,

said he felt a lot better against Dosedel.

"My range was much better and I felt I had a pretty good rhythm," he said. "I worked on a few things yesterday and it paid off today. ... Keeping the ball in the court. That's a start."



Pete Sampras in action against Czech Slava Dosedel during their Australian Open fourth round meeting yesterday. — AFP photo



American Andre Agassi blows a kiss to his admirers after defeating Mark Philippoussis yesterday. — AFP photo

AUSSIE OPEN AT A GLANCE

MELBOURNE, Jan 23 (AP): Highlights Sunday on the seventh day of the US Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park.

Weather: Cool and windy with a temperature of 66 F (19 Celsius).

Attendance: 28,328.

Results: Men's singles, No. 1 Andre Agassi and No. 3 Pete Sampras advanced. No. 11 Tim Henman and No. 16 Mark Philippoussis lost.

Results: Women's singles, No. 2 Lindsay Davenport and No. 9 Julie Halard-Decugis advanced. No. 4 Mary Pierce and No. 11 Anna Kournikova lost.

Stat of the Day: In her 7-5, 6-4 loss to Ai Sugiyama, No. 4 seeded Mary Pierce had 12 break points, including six in one game, but could only convert two into service breaks.

Quote of the Day: "I had to let the frustration out, otherwise I was going to kill someone. Better the racket," Mark Philippoussis explaining why he smashed his racket after blowing a 4-1 lead to lose a second set tiebreak against Andre Agassi.

Female MPs floor Tyson!

LONDON, Jan 23: Boxing champion Mike Tyson has had an invitation to tour the British House of Commons withdrawn after protests by female members of parliament, a Labour MP said today, reports Reuters.

A cross-party group of MPs interested in boxing — from those with a personal interest to those wanting to promote the sport's image — had last month suggested inviting Tyson to visit Parliament during his current stay in Britain.

But female MPs from the governing Labour party, concerned about Parliament appearing to roll out the red carpet for a convicted rapist, stepped in last week to stop the move.

"(A visit) was clearly a media opportunity that would have overshadowed all the important work by the government, which has taken rape and domestic violence so seriously," Lorna Fitzsimons, Labour MP for Rochdale, said.

"We thought a visit would be inappropriate."

A former world heavyweight champion who has called himself "the baddest man on the planet", Tyson served time in prison for rape and assault — convictions which normally would have barred him from Britain — but the government decided to let him in for his January 29 bout against Julius Francis in Manchester.

The invitation for Tyson to visit the House of Commons had been discussed long before the controversy over the boxer's trip erupted, Fitzsimons said. But after several objections, the idea was scrapped.

The upcoming fight has been upstaged by the man, with media tracking his every move and large crowds gathering when he appears in public.

Francis waiting in the wings

LONDON, Jan 23: While Mike Tyson makes the headlines with extravagant spending and crowd-pulling walkabouts in London, Julius Francis is quietly waiting to make a name for himself, reports AP.

By beating Mike Tyson. The two heavyweights meet at Manchester next Saturday before a sellout 21,000 crowd with Tyson the overwhelming favourite.

Francis, 21-7, is a comparatively unknown name of London and few sports fans over here know his name even though he's the British heavyweight champion.

That's something Francis aims to put right at the MEN Arena next weekend. But he said on Saturday he's happy to let Tyson grab the spotlight with a walkabout that attracted a crowd of more than 1,000 at Brixton on Friday and a visit to a jewellers shop to spend 1.6 million dollars on an emerald and diamond bracelet and a diamond encrusted watch.



THE FALLEN: Anna Kournikova (L) and Mary Pierce. — AFP photo

Kournikova, Pierce exit



MELBOURNE, Jan 23 (Reuters/AP): Former teen queen Jennifer Capriati reached her first Grand Slam quarterfinal in seven years today when she beat Switzerland's Patty Schnyder at the Australian Open.

The 23-year-old New Yorker advanced to the last eight with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 win which confirmed her return to the fore of women's tennis.

Joining her will be France's Julie Halard-Decugis, who was leading Jana Kandarr 6-1, 3-0 when the German retired hurt.

World number two Lindsay Davenport also reached the quarters, ending the run of Russian teenager Anna Kournikova 6-4, 6-3.

Davenport started off strongly, breaking Kournikova's serve twice and dropping only one point as she raced to a 3-0 lead in the first set.

But the Russian 11th seed found her range and made a match of it, grabbing one service break back and bravely pushing Wimbledon champion Davenport around the court.

Under pressure, however, Kournikova was never a real threat.

Although the pair exchanged service breaks early in the third set, Davenport's consistency was the key — she converted five of nine break points while Kournikova managed only two of 12.

It was her sixth straight defeat in the fourth round at Grand Slam tournaments — the first round at which seeded

players can come up against each other in the sport's majors — and underlined just how poorly Kournikova fares against top players.

But, as Davenport conceded after the match, the 18-year-old is not short of talent.

"She hits some unbelievable shots. She just doesn't have a huge margin for error, so sometimes she just makes a few errors and maybe goes for too much," Davenport said.

"I think the thing that will take her over the hump she's at is a little more consistency."

Ai Sugiyama rolled up in gusting winds at Melbourne Park and then swamped No. 4 seeded Mary Pierce in a 7-5, 6-4 upset Sunday to advance to the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"I tried to be aggressive and hit balls as I had as I can," said the Japanese No. 1, who finished last year ranked No. 24. She reached the fourth round at Roland Garros in 1995, at Wimbledon in '96 and at the Australian Open in '98 but had never reached the final eight.

Sugiyama scored an in-and-out break in the fourth game, helped by a lucky net cord at 30-40, and took a 3-1 lead.

After a marathon deuce game at 4-3, when Pierce had six break points, Sugiyama finally held serve for a 5-3 and then had a set-point at 5-4 before the French player broke back to 5-5.

But Sugiyama won the next game on a scorching crosscourt backhand before serving out the set.

The 24-year-old right-hander grabbed a double break for a 5-2 lead in the second set and had a match-point on serve before Pierce again broke back to 5-4.

Serving for the match, Sugiyama saved two break points and then set up for second match point with a deft touch, angling a forehand volley at the net away from a desperate Pierce. She sealed her quarterfinal berth when Pierce hit a return into the net.

It was the third time in their last four meetings that Sugiyama has beaten the 1995 Australian Open champion.

Last year, she beat Pierce in San Diego and Moscow, but lost on hardcourt at Los Angeles.

Sugiyama is prepared for a tough match against Capriati.

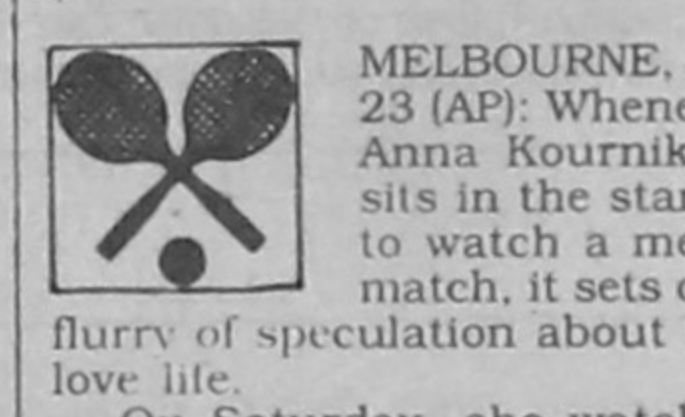
"She's hitting the ball very hard. We've been practicing," said Sugiyama. "I have to play so good for sure, I'll just do my best."

In other matches involving Asian players, Japan's Mana Miyagi teamed with American Debbie Graham for a 7-6, 6-3 victory over the fifth-seeded pair, Romania's Irina Spirlea and Dutch player Carolin Vis, and advanced to the round of 16 in women's doubles.

In round 16 matches, top seeds Lisa Raymond of the United States and Renee Stubbs of Australia defeated Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn and Argentina's Florencia Labat 6-1, 4-6, 6-1.

American Erika De Lone and Australian Nicole Pratt beat Japan's Rika Hiraki and Australia's Anniel Ellwood 6-3, 2-6, 6-3.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN NOTEBOOK



MELBOURNE, Jan 23 (AP): Whenever Anna Kournikova sits in the stands to watch a men's match, it sets off a flurry of speculation about her love life.

On Saturday, she watched No. 4 seeded Nicolas Pietrangeli move into the fourth round with a win over Morocco's Karim Alami. The tiny German said later: "We are sweethearts."

Then he added: "It's not true. My real girlfriend will be upset if you write that. Anna's just a friend and we might play mixed doubles together one day."

Kournikova has twice watched Australian big server Mark Philippoussis on center court, but both say they are just friends. She often watched Ecuadorian Nicolas Lapentti on his way to the semifinal of last year's Australian Open.

The Russian said her coach had advised her to watch the men's game and pick up some ideas.

SIDELINE VIEW An injured Patrick Rafter, who was No. 1 in the world for a week last year, says sitting out the Australian Open is easier than he expected.

The first week of a Grand Slam is always sensational and I have loved sitting back as a spectator. The Australian wrote in a column in the Sunday Herald Sun of Melbourne.

"To be honest, I did not expect to enjoy being on the sidelines with the Open going on, but I have been surprised by how much I have been able to get into it without missing it," he said.

Rafter won the US Open in 1997 and 1998 but has never made it past the fourth round in the Australian Open singles. He won the doubles title in Melbourne last year with Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden.

Rafter has been sidelined since withdrawing from last year's US Open and is still recuperating from surgery to his right shoulder.

MARATHONERS Australian Leyton Hewitt not only has 13 consecutive singles wins to start the year, he's also in demand on the doubles circuit.

The 18-year-old is paired with compatriot Sandon Stolle in the men's doubles and they've suggested they're aspiring to become Australia's Davis Cup combination.

Hewitt was also scheduled Sunday to play mixed doubles with his sister, Jaslyn Hewitt.

Earlier in the tournament, Hewitt said his sister would never forgive him if he didn't fulfill his family commitments in the mixed doubles but after a tough third-round win Saturday, the teen-ager said he may have to reconsider.

In the women's draw, no other player spent as much time on court Jana Kandarr in the last 10 days.

The German, who has been taken to three sets in each of the first three rounds and has saved nine match points, has played 181 games including qualifying.

Although, even if she bows out in the fourth-round, her ranking was expected to jump at least 40 places.

Cacho Spain's athlete-of-the-century

MADRID, JAN 23: Olympic 1,500 metres gold medalist Fermin Cacho was voted Spain's athlete of the century in a poll jointly organised by the Spanish Olympic Committee, the Spanish Athletics Federation and the International Amateur Athletic Federation, on Saturday, reports Xinhua.

After winning the 1988 world junior 1,500 bronze medal he went on to become Spain's first Olympic gold medalist on the track when he was a surprise winner of the blue ribbon event in 1992.

Montalvo won the women's long jump and Anton the men's marathon.

Moroccans making waves



MELBOURNE, Jan 23 (AP/Reuters): King Mohammed VI of Morocco jets and golfs, but doesn't play tennis. He may be inspired to do so by his on-form compatriots at the Australian Open.

Hicham Arazzi earned a quarterfinal spot Sunday. Another Moroccan, Younes El Aynaoui, survived a five-setter to reach the fourth round. A third, Karim Alami, lost in the third round Saturday.

It's the best Grand Slam performance ever by a trio of players from Morocco, where sports fans usually stick to soccer and those who want to play professional tennis have to do it on their own. The tennis federation there offers little help to young talent.

But tennis mania is now loose in Morocco.

"They are following, definitely, with the satellites, on TV, and by the Internet," El Aynaoui said Sunday at a joint news conference with Arazzi. The two later posed for photographers with the Moroccan flag.

"I hope something is going to be built (in Morocco) like a camp or centre because so many young players want to go on the Tour now, seeing our experience," El Aynaoui said.

But El Aynaoui, now 28, had a tougher time convincing his parents that he wanted to pursue a tennis career.

El Aynaoui had to teach himself the game. Tennis is hardly considered a mainstream sport in the back streets of his home city Rabat but he got involved because of a nearby court.

His parents did not immediately take to his passion for the game and tried to persuade him out of it, although they've since been turned around.

With little help from the Moroccan tennis federation they paid for him to go to the United States in pursuit of his dream.

The veteran El Aynaoui was also off the circuit for two years because of a foot injury. He gets his rackets and other gear for free, but he doesn't get paid to use it as many other top players do.

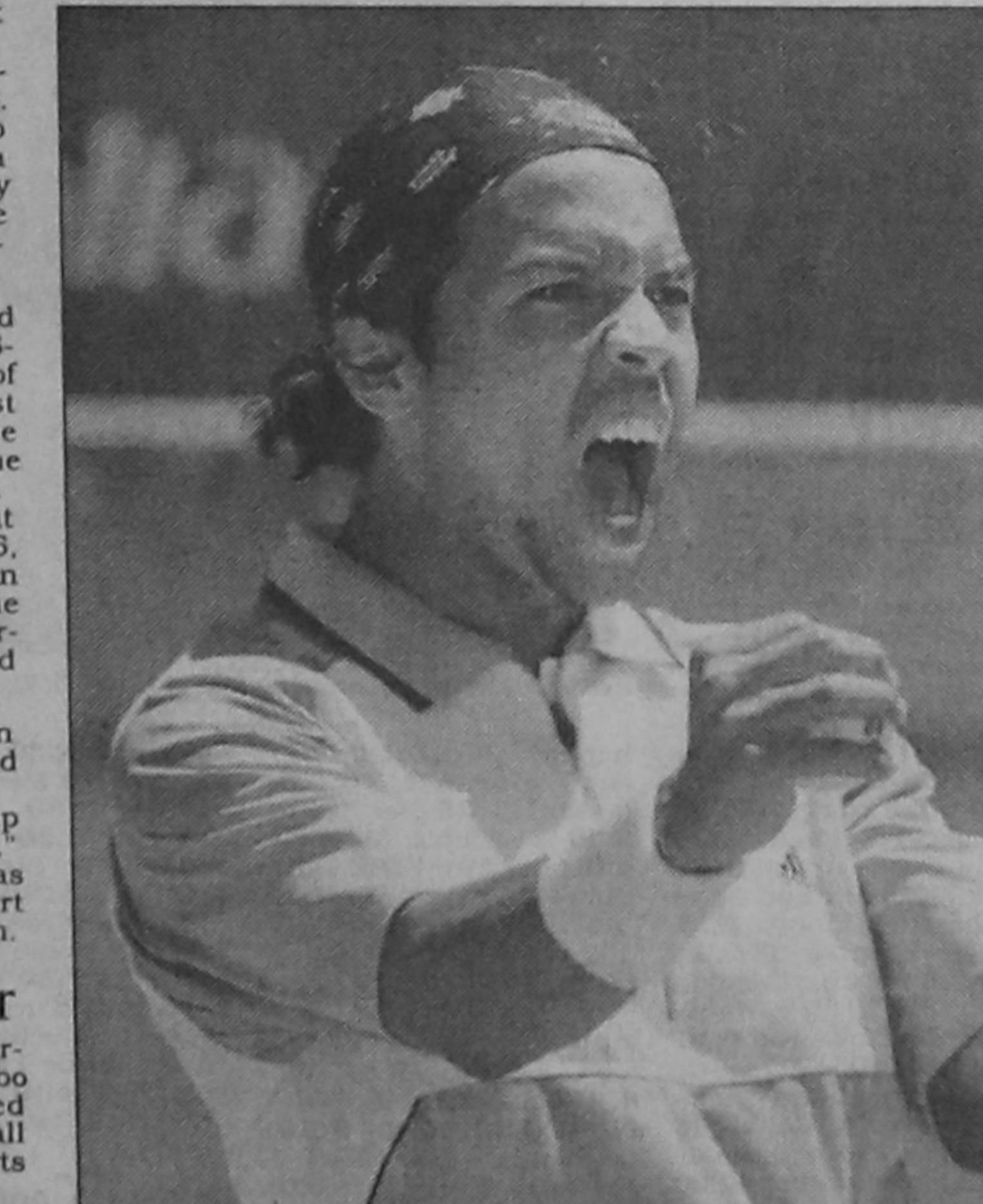
El Aynaoui next faces Arnaud Clement of France. Arazzi

faces Andre Agassi. Arazzi turned professional in 1993 and while he's earned more than 1.5 million dollars in prize money, his only title to date was in his hometown in 1997.

Although his best results have been on the slower clay courts of Europe, Arazzi has been in great touch in his early matches at Melbourne Park this year and remains the only player in the men's singles not to have dropped a set in the tournament.

The Moroccans have always counted on royal support. King Hassan II who died in July last year, was an avid tennis fan and player. Mohammed, his son and successor, follows the game.

"He's playing golf and a lot of jetski and all kind of sports like this," El Aynaoui said of the new monarch. "His brother is playing tennis, small brother, but I don't think he's playing tennis."



Hicham Arazzi of Morocco celebrates after beating Nicolas Escude of France in their fourth round match of the Australian Open on January 23. — AFP photo

Cambodia to host TT World Cup

PHNOM PENH, Jan 23: Cambodia will host the Women's Table Tennis World Cup at Phnom Penh's Olympic Stadium on January 28 to 30, reports Xinhua.

The annual Women's Table Tennis World Cup is certified by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). It is the first time for Cambodia to host a world-class women's table tennis competition.

The World Cup, sponsored mainly by Thai Boon Roong Company, will feature 16 athletes from 14 countries and regions.

N'singhdi soccer

NARSINGHDI, Jan 23: Sher-e-Bangla Club defeated Gilibo Eleven 2-1 in the Shaheed Mueyuddin District football tournament here today, reports UNE.

Rabi netted both the goals for the winners while Tareq scored the lone goal for the losers.

Matthaeus' farewell date set

MUNICH, Germany, Jan 23: The gala match for Lothar Matthaeus, Bayern Munich's legendary German international sweeper, has been set for May 26 in the Olympiastadion, the Bavarian club announced on Sunday, reports AP.

The clash will be between Bundesliga leaders Bayern and the German national squad, and will also give the national side a warm-up prior to the Euro 2000 championships in Belgium and Holland from June 10-July 2.

Matthaeus, who skipped West Germany to the 1990 World Cup title, is set to join the New York/New Jersey Metros in Major League Soccer in March and will play his first match for the New York club against Miami on March 26.

Matthaeus' farewell date set

The move had been in doubt after Matthaeus criticised the club after manager Charlie Sclittano and Serb coach Bora Milutinovic were both sacked - the two people who had been in contact with him over the transfer.

Matthaeus, who holds the world record of caps with Swedish keeper Thomas Ravelli on 143 and a record 25 in World Cup finals, criticized the Metros for not consulting him on such matters.

He believed he should have had a say before the two key figures in gaining his signature were let go by the club because he said he was promised he would be consulted over "sporting decisions."