

Sport

Where did
Edmundo
go?

SAO PAULO, Feb 6: Brazilian wildman Edmundo, nicknamed the animal, hit the headlines once again on Saturday when he walked out on his team, Vasco Da Gama, just as they were about to play a match against Palmeiras, reports AFP.

Edmundo, his kit and left the stadium with his agent.

Club doctor Clovis Munhoz said he did not examine Edmundo and was told by a Palmeiras official for whom he played two years ago.

Edmundo was also seen talking to the Palmeiras coach Luiz Felipe Scolari before taking off his sports clothes and doing his disappearing act.

Vasco Da Gama official Isaias Timoco said he could not confirm whether Edmundo was being sold or not. "We can only say he told us he was not fit enough to play. I don't know anything else."

After the match Scolari said Edmundo would be welcome at his club. "I must say Edmundo would be an excellent signing for Palmeiras. It would leave me very contented."

Palmeiras won this Rio-Sao Paulo tournament match 2-1 while Palmeiras fans were singing during the whole contest.

Edmundo's personal style certainly gets him noticed.

When he re-signed for Vasco Da Gama he negotiated a special clause that enabled him to visit nightclubs - unlike his teammates who were under curfew.

Among his other antics have been getting a chimpanzee drunk at his son's birthday party - a feat that angered Rio's animal rights lobby.

He was also the subject of a paternity suit from a leading Brazilian TV presenter. After the player denied the charge but the medical tests proved he was the father of the child.

He has recently been out of favour with Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo, who is a stickler for discipline.

Vasco's purse
blocked by
authorities

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 6: The 4.5 million dollars won by Brazil's Vasco Da Gama for their runner-up spot in the World Club Championship last month was frozen by authorities here on Saturday, reports AFP.

Judge Carlos Lugones said an ever increasing and unpaid tax bill by the club means their winnings will be frozen.

Vasco Da Gama president Eurico Miranda questioned the right of Lugones to prevent them being paid for their efforts on the pitch.

"I think this gentleman (Judge Lugones) likes to appear in newspapers. To block our prize money is going beyond his powers as Vasco Da Gama have a right to it because of their success in the World Club championship."

Miranda, who said they would be appealing the ruling, did admit they had tax debts of about 3.8 million dollars because of their high wage bill.

He added they were paying back part of the debts after a ruling last year that 15 per cent of all their winnings in competitions would be used for that purpose.

Vasco Da Gama bought Romario just before the World Club Championship which certainly added to their wage bill. Vasco were beaten by rivals Corinthians in a penalty shoot-out in the final.

Miranda has also been fined 40,000 dollars by the sport's world governing body FIFA for his contentious comments after their World Club Championship match with Mexican club Necaxa.

Zitouni fancies
Italy

KANO, Nigeria, Feb 6: Tunisia's star striker Zitouni Ali expressed his preference on Saturday to play in the Italian league rather than the poorer French championship after the African Nations Cup finishes later this month, reports AFP.

The 20-year-old, who plays for crack Tunisian club Esperance, claimed that he has received offers from mostly French clubs, but that he had also heard of interest from Serie A giants Juventus and minnows Bari.

"I have been contacted by French clubs like Monaco, PSG, Nancy and Lens but my mind is with Juventus or Bari who have shown an interest in signing me," he said.

"I've told them to come down and watch me play live in the Nations Cup and if I am impressed with their offers, I will sign for any one of the Italian clubs."

Sauzee ready
to call it a day

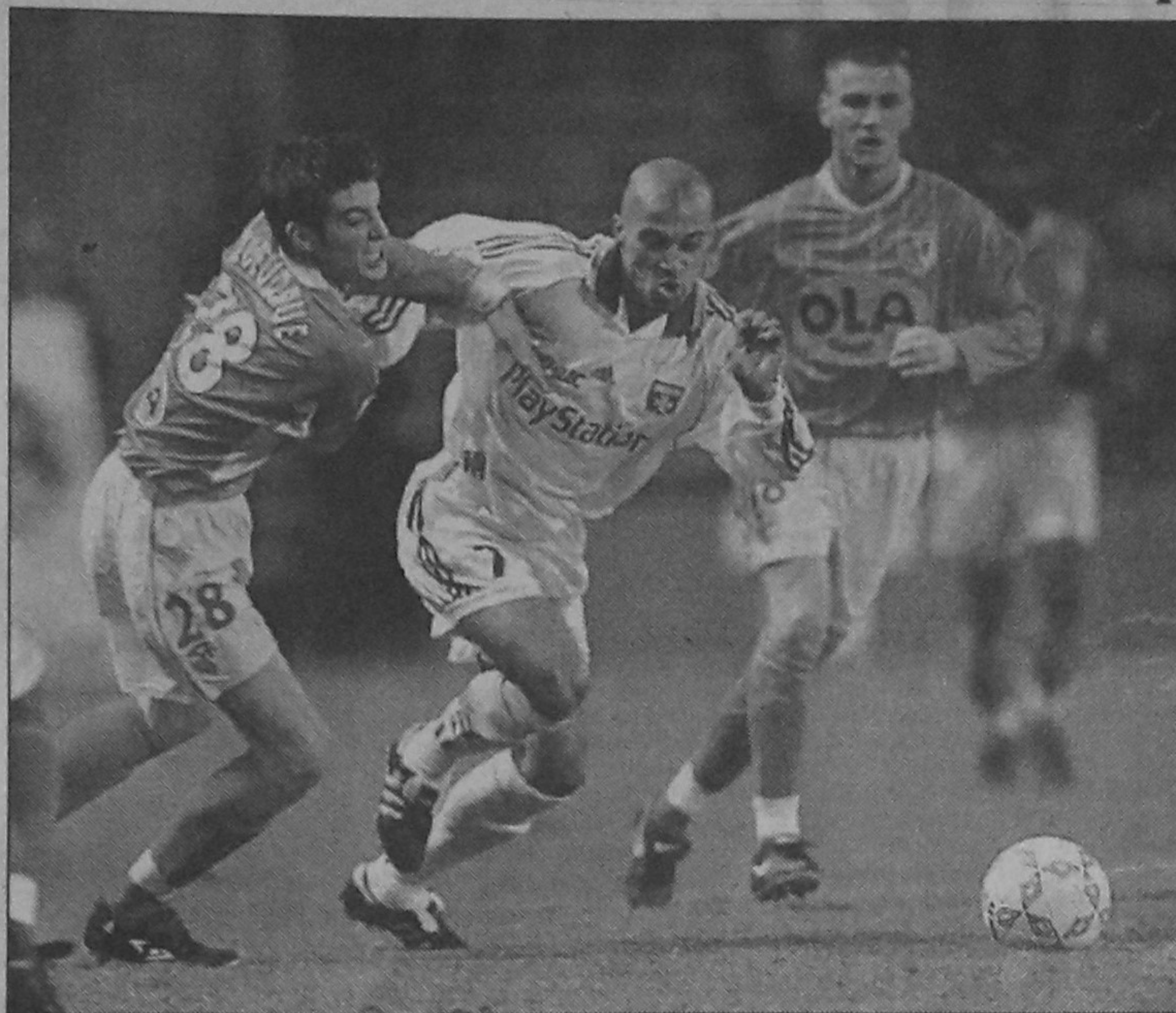
GLASGOW, Feb 6: Scottish Premiership side Hibernian's French midfielder Franck Sauzee said Sunday that he intends to retire this summer, reports AFP.

The 34-year-old midfielder said that not even a place in the UEFA Cup would persuade him to stay.

"I will end my career with Hibs and I'd like my last game to be the Scottish Cup final in May," Sauzee told the Scottish Sunday Express.

"I would not like my standards to drop. I have too much respect for the manager Alex McLeish, this club and the wonderful supporters for that to happen."

When I am ready I will perhaps turn to coaching and I would also like to do some television work."



Lens defender Franck Queudrue (L) trying to hold back Steve Marlet (C) of Auxerre during their French First Division clash at Lens on February 5. — AFP photo

French First Division

Dacourt carries Lens

PARIS, Feb 6: A superb double strike by Olivier Dacourt inspired Lens to a 2-1 win over 10-man Auxerre.

Lens' third successive win and Auxerre's first defeat in eight matches, on Saturday in the latest round of French League matches, reports AFP.

Leaders Monaco, who play at Lyon on Sunday, maintained their 10-point lead though Paris Saint Germain moved into second spot on goal difference ahead of Auxerre after a scoreless draw at home to relegation threatened Nantes.

Dacourt, who was an eight-million-dollar signing from Everton last summer, gave the 1998 champions the lead in the 44th minute going past two defenders and shooting into the net from two metres out.

However, Auxerre, who only escaped relegation last season on the final day, showed the resilience that had kept them unbeaten in the last seven matches by equalising in the 55th minute.

Narcisse Kapo shooting home from just outside the area despite being surrounded by four Lens players.

Dacourt, though, restored Lens' lead with a superb free-kick out on the left and Auxerre lost all hope when they were reduced to 10 men minutes after Dacourt's second as defender Cyril Magnier was sent-off for a

dreadful tackle on Pascal Nouma.

Champions Bordeaux may have lost all hope of defending their title successfully but they recorded their first win since the winter break with a 3-0 thrashing of Strasbourg.

Stephane Ziari opened the scoring for Bordeaux having been set up by Sylvain Wilford in the third minute.

Wilford, who has failed to repeat his scoring exploits of last season, created the second 10 minutes before halftime sliding the pass to Johan Micoud through two Strasbourg players before Micoud beat one Strasbourg defender and shot home.

Wilford's French international strike partner Lilian Laslandes added a third shortly before the full time whistle with a cheeky chip over the keeper Thierry Debès.

Crisis-riven St Etienne slid further into the relegation battle as they were soundly walloped by Bastia, who preserved their unbeaten home record, 4-0 - Les Verts have garnered just one point from their last 18 and are only a point off the bottom three.

Bastia striker Yann Lachuer, on-loan from Paris Saint Germain, opened the floodgates in the first-half as he evaded two defenders and slotted the ball coolly home.

The Corsican side added a second half-way through the second-half as Andre Nee spotted Jerome Alonzo off his line and lobbed him from 18 metres for his eighth goal of the season.

Piotr Swierczewski added a third and a completely unmarked Nee scored his second shooting home past a demoralised Alonzo.

The surprise packets of this season's championship Sedan kept up their excellent season beating fellow newcomers Troyes 2-0.

Sedan, who are in with a real chance of qualifying for the UEFA Cup next season, scored almost straight from the second-half kick-off with Pierre Deblois lobbing the ball over the keeper from 10 metres out for his seventh of the season.

They added a second two minutes from the finish as substitute Eric Crosnier stole in to get his foot to the ball and beat the onrushing keeper Laurent Weber.

Despite being reduced to 10 men in the first-half Rennes kept Nancy firmly in the relegation mire beating them 3-1 with highly-rated Burundian striker Shabani Nonda scoring twice.

In Sunday's other game, Metz meet Marseille who are still struggling in mid-table following their mid-season change of coach and locker room drama.

Scottish Premiership

Hearts break
Celtic's heart

GLASGOW, Feb 6: Celtic's hopes of winning the Scottish Premier League title suffered an enormous blow on Saturday when they let a two-goal lead slip and lost 3-2 to Hearts giving bitter rivals Rangers the chance to take another stride towards the Premier League title, reports AFP.

Trailing 2-0 after half an hour, Hearts produced a thrilling recovery, culminating in a penalty winner from Colin Cameron, his second of the match, six minutes from time.

Celtic, nine points behind leaders Rangers at the start of play, could find themselves even further behind on Sunday.

Dick Advocaat's side secured victory at Hibernian.

The hosts got off to a flying start when a brilliant long-range effort from Lubomir Moravcik put them ahead after 15 minutes and when Mark Viduka's 29th-minute header gave Celtic a two-goal cushion, John Barnes's side appeared to be cruising to victory.

But within three minutes Hearts halved the deficit through Cameron as the visitors, sensing panic in the Celtic defence, started playing with renewed confidence.

Gary Naysmith struck ten minutes after the break from Fitzroy Simpson's cross to level the scores and with four minutes to go Cameron completed the comeback to secure all three points.

Hearts were awarded a penalty when Darren Jackson was shoved inside the area by Tommy Johnson and Cameron stepped up to rifle the spot-kick beyond the reach of Jonathan Gould.

Elsewhere, Aberdeen won only their fourth game of the season by beating St Johnstone 2-1 at Pittodrie thanks to a Robbie Winters winner five minutes after half time.

John O'Neil had given the visitors the lead after 14 minutes but Arild Stavrum equalised from the spot six minutes later.

Winters' cool finish lifted Aberdeen off the foot of the Premier League for the first time this season.

A Hugh Robertson goal inspired Dundee to a convincing 3-0 win over Motherwell at Fir Park.

After a dull first half, the game exploded into action when Robertson put the visitors into a 49th-minute lead with a tremendous 35-yard shot.

Gavin Rae made it two on 65 minutes and substitute James Grady wrapped up the points from the penalty spot with a minute to go.

Matthaeus
foresees
farewell

BERLIN, Feb 6: Veteran libero Lothar Matthaeus says he may cry when he plays for Bayern Munich for the last time next month, reports Reuters.

"I am naturally aware that when the final whistle blows on the Champions League match against Real Madrid on March 8 a part of my life will end," the 36-year-old German international wrote in a column in Sunday newspaper Welt am Sonntag.

Matthaeus, who returned to Bayern in 1992 after a first spell with the Munich club from 1984 to 1988, will join US Major League Club New York-New Jersey MetroStars on March 10.

"Perhaps there will be a few tears," he said, looking ahead to his last match with Bayern.

Matthaeus, who captained Germany to victory in the 1990 World Cup and has won a world-record equalling 143 caps, is expected to end his international career after this year's European championship finals in Belgium and the Netherlands.

He will be 39 in March and suggested he might retire after one season in the United States.

Tunisian coach
to ring the
changes

KANO, Nigeria, Feb 6: Tunisia's Italian coach Francesco Scoglio said on Saturday that he planned to make some changes for Monday's African Nations Cup quarter-final with Egypt from the team that beat Congo 1-0 on Thursday, reports AFP.

Scoglio said after a training session that both Baya Zoubair and Jaziri Zied as well as Azatiz Walid were probable starters as they had played well against the Egyptians in previous encounters.

"The three players that will start the game are boys who know the Egyptians very well having played against them in the past," Scoglio said.

"I rested them in anticipation of this clash and I am sure they will not disappoint me when the chips are down."

"If you saw how my boys contained Mustapha Hadji and Yousef Chippou when we played Morocco, then you'll understand what I meant when I said we know our neighbours very well."

"On Monday, Hassan Hossam (Egypt's highly-rated striker) will be made to look ordinary. We have our game plan that will render him unproductive on the field - Just mark my word."

"The man we dread most in the Egypt team is not Hani Ramzi or Hassan Hossam but gangling Salah Hasni Ahmed. He is the most creative and deadliest player in the Egyptian attack."

"We are working seriously on how to keep him in check without losing sight of Hossam and Ramzi," he added.

Davis Cup

Big guns in big trouble

PARIS, Feb 6 (AFP/AP): There were some major shocks Saturday as some of the sport's top nations faced early first round exits from the Davis Cup.

France, the beaten finalists in last year's Davis Cup, were eliminated from this year's tournament as Brazil grabbed

day's singles action when Fernando Meligeni outgunned Pioline in a five-set battle and Kuerten coasted to a much easier win over Jerome Golmard.

It was sweet revenge for the Brazilians who were eliminated 3-2 in last year's quarterfinals.

USA-BRAZIL
In Harare the Americans went behind against Zimbabwe after Wayne Black and Kevin

ons Australia, courtesy of a doubles victory by Roger Federer and Lorenzo Mantia.

Mantia and Federer, who beat Mark Philippoussis in the opening singles match Friday, fought back to win 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 against Wayne Arthurs and Sandon Stolle.

Australian captain John Newcombe said Mantia had been outstanding. "I kept waiting for him to go off the ball, but he never did," Newcombe said.

"It was a difficult first set, but then we started playing really well," said Mantia. "We came through some difficult moments but the communication between us was great. We started playing better and better and they had some problems."

Australian hopes are now pinned on Lleyton Hewitt, who tackles Federer in the first reverse singles Sunday.

Philippoussis, who guided Australia to victory over France in last year's final, plays in the final singles.

GERMANY-
NETHERLANDS

David Prinosil and Marcel Goellner fought out a four-sets win over experienced Dutch pair Paul Haarhuis and Jan Siemerink to give Germany a 2-1 lead.

The two Germans recovered from the loss of the first set and survived a tie-break to take the third before winning 4-6, 6-3, 7-6, 6-3.

The winner will play either Switzerland or Australia in the quarterfinals.

Tommy Haas will seal the tie for Germany if he overcomes Sjeng Schalken in the first of today's reverse singles. If he does not, the final clash between German Rainer Schuetler and John Van Lottum will be decisive.

BRITAIN-CZECH
REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic nosed 2-1 ahead of Britain in their Davis Cup World Group first round clash on Saturday winning the doubles in four sets and forcing Tim Henman into a must-win situation today.

Jiri Novak and doubles specialist David Rikl beat Henman and 33-year-old Neil Broad 7-6, 6-4, 6-7, 6-2 on a slow, purpose-built clay court inside Ostrava's Winter Stadium.

The Czechs need only win one of today's two reverse singles to advance to the quarterfinals. Henman will open play against Novak, aiming to give Jamie Delgado a chance to redeem himself against Slava Dosedel after Friday's crushing loss to Novak.

Hingis' happy
hunting

TOKYO, Feb 6: Martina Hingis enjoyed a double victory by beating French opponents to defend her singles title and regain the doubles title at the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament today, reports AFP.

The Swiss top seed, heavily favoured after Lindsay Davenport pulled out with a thigh problem, lived up to her pre-tournament promise with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over sixth seed Sandrine Testud.

Hingis then came back to the artificial indoor court with Mary Pierce to beat the fourth-seeded French pair of Alexandra Fusai and Nathalie Tauziat 6-4, 6-1 in the doubles final.

It was her third singles title here, following victories in 1997 and last year, and her second doubles trophy after she won in 1998 with Mirjana Lucic of Croatia.

"I didn't win the title in Australia again, so it's nice going back home with the victory and positive attitude into the next tournaments," said Hingis.

"It's been a good year. First in Sydney, I made semi-finals, Melbourne finals and now victory, so hopefully I can keep the way I have now."

In the singles final, Hingis slipped away a 5-2 lead to a 5-all in the second set, failing to serve out for the match twice, but she made no mistakes in the following two games to finish off the 74-minute match.

Hingis and Pierce completed the doubles final in just less than an hour.

"I feel very good here in Japan. This title means a lot to me. It's the first one of this new millennium. I've been always very successful here. I like here very much."



An euphoric Martina Hingis puts the Pan Pacific Open trophy on her head after winning the championship at Tokyo yesterday. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Attempt	1 Obi
5 Fast flyer	2 Frill for
8 Fraud	3 Fonteyn
12 Emanation	4 Spindled
13 "Lazy River"	5 40-year-old doll
14 Crazy	6 Bolivian
15 Luminary	7 Taler
16 Nursery rhyme	8 7 Spigit
17 Nursery rhyme	9 Byword
18 Nursery rhyme	10 Home-
19 Nursery rhyme	11 Copper-
20 Match	12 Lullaby
21 Lemieux	13 Lullaby
22 Peninsula	14 Lullaby
23 Nursery rhyme	15 Lullaby
24 Nursery rhyme	16 Lullaby
25 Nursery rhyme	17 Lullaby
26 Nursery rhyme	18 Lullaby
27 Nursery rhyme	19 Lullaby
28 Nursery rhyme	20 Lullaby
29 Nursery rhyme	21 Lullaby
30 Nursery rhyme	22 Lullaby
31 Nursery rhyme	23 Lullaby
32 Nursery rhyme	24 Lullaby
33 Nursery rhyme	25 Lullaby
34 Nursery rhyme	26 Lullaby
35 Nursery rhyme	27 Lullaby
36 Nursery rhyme	28 Lullaby
37 Nursery rhyme	29 Lullaby
38 Nursery rhyme	30 Lullaby
39 Nursery rhyme	31 Lullaby
40 Nursery rhyme	32 Lullaby
41 Nursery rhyme	33 Lullaby
42 Nursery rhyme	34 Lullaby
43 Nursery rhyme	35 Lullaby
44 Nursery rhyme	36 Lullaby
45 Nursery rhyme	37 Lullaby
46 Nursery rhyme	38 Lullaby
47 Nursery rhyme	39 Lullaby
48 Nursery rhyme	40 Lullaby
49 Nursery rhyme	41 Lullaby
50 Nursery rhyme	42 Lullaby
51 Nursery rhyme	43 Lullaby
52 Nursery rhyme	44 Lullaby
53 Nursery rhyme	45 Lullaby
54 Nursery rhyme	46 Lullaby
55 Nursery rhyme	47 Lullaby
56 Nursery rhyme	48 Lullaby
57 Nursery rhyme	49 Lullaby
58 Nursery rhyme	50 Lullaby
59 Nursery rhyme	51 Lullaby
60 Nursery rhyme	52 Lullaby
61 Nursery rhyme	53 Lullaby
62 Nursery rhyme	54 Lullaby
63 Nursery rhyme	55 Lullaby
64 Nursery rhyme	56 Lullaby
65 Nursery rhyme	57 Lullaby
66 Nursery rhyme	58 Lullaby
67 Nursery rhyme	59 Lullaby
68 Nursery rhyme	60 Lullaby
69 Nursery rhyme	61 Lullaby
70 Nursery rhyme	62 Lullaby
71 Nursery rhyme	63 Lullaby
72 Nursery rhyme	64 Lullaby
73 Nursery rhyme	65 Lullaby
74 Nursery rhyme	66 Lullaby
75 Nursery rhyme	67 Lullaby
76 Nursery rhyme	68 Lullaby
77 Nursery rhyme	69 Lullaby
78 Nursery rhyme	70 Lullaby
79 Nursery rhyme	71 Lullaby
80 Nursery rhyme	72 Lullaby
81 Nursery rhyme	73 Lullaby
82 Nursery rhyme	74 Lullaby
83 Nursery rhyme	75 Lullaby
84 Nursery rhyme	76 Lullaby
85 Nursery rhyme	77 Lullaby
86 Nursery rhyme	78 Lullaby
87 Nursery rhyme	79 Lullaby
88 Nursery rhyme	80 Lullaby
89 Nursery rhyme	81 Lullaby
90 Nursery rhyme	82 Lullaby
91 Nursery rhyme	83 Lullaby
92 Nursery rhyme	84 Lullaby
93 Nursery rhyme	85 Lullaby
94 Nursery rhyme	86 Lullaby
95 Nursery rhyme	87 Lullaby
96 Nursery rhyme	88 Lullaby
97 Nursery rhyme	89 Lullaby
98 Nursery rhyme	90 Lullaby
99 Nursery rhyme	91 Lullaby
100 Nursery rhyme	92 Lullaby

CRYPTOQUIP

F X L A O V K C V J Q G A B
J F X J G X M Y A C J A M H X M A
V M B Q C X M Q R O H K G F
R A L A R - F A X E A B Y A V Y R A ?
Yesterday's Cryptquip: A STINGY GAS-STATION OWNER WAS ALL TOO OFTEN VERY SELF-SERVING.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: J equals T

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals Q, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Paris Open

Spotlight on Serena

PARIS, Feb 6 (AFP): Serena Williams may have entered the hallowed portals of the Grand Slam club with her US Open triumph last year but the big-hitting US teen has much to prove as she arrives in Paris this week looking to repeat her win 12 months ago at the Gaz de Paris Open at the Pierre de Coubertin stadium.

Like her big sister Venus, Serena is rarely found wanting when it comes to faith in her own ability - but following her surprise fourth round loss at the Australian Open to Russia's Elena Likhovtseva there are increasing signs that over-confidence could be the enemy.

On that occasion, seeded third, the 18-year-old Williams let herself down with a rash of unforced errors with her serve and forehand particularly off colour.

True to form, she pinned the blame firmly on her own shoulders, admitting afterwards: "I couldn't stop hitting errors. I just didn't do anything right."

Williams, who bagged five titles in 1999, one less than her sister, promised to get herself straight on the practice courts and will be keen to show that the Likhovtseva disaster was a one-off.

The powerful American will be the overwhelming favourite in the absence of the top three players in the WTA world rankings as Swiss Miss Martina Hingis will concentrate on preparing for Scottsdale, Arizona, in three weeks time.

That is also the next challenge for Australian Open champion Lindsay Davenport, assuming her current hamstring problems, have cleared up by then.

Venus is similarly sitting out Paris so there will be no sibling rivalry to spur Serena on as she seeks to emulate Martina Navratilova in winning the tournament twice having seen off tough Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo in three sets last time out.

Barely half of the world's top 20 will be present with home hope Nathalie Tauziat the highest-ranked at sixth after Serena.

Tauziat distinguished herself in 1999 by becoming the oldest tournament winner of the season at the age of 32 and 21 days in Leipzig, Germany.

The public's - and, no doubt, the media's - interest in the event will be all the greater for the appearance of Russian pin-

up Anna Kournikova, who along with rising Belgian star Justine Henin and France's own Amelie Cochetoux has been offered a wildcard entry.

Kournikova's long quest for a title shows no immediate sign of ending as Davenport steamed past her in straight sets without undue difficulty in Melbourne and Hingis allowed her just two games this week in Tokyo.