



fall on all fours after a tackle by South African Helman in Nations' Cup quarterfinal in Kumasi on February 2. —AFP Photo

Cup Cameroon in last four

er with four goals, had to get on the scoresheet. Ghana, who scraped into the eighth despite losing their group game 2-0 to Ivory Coast, gave another inept performance which could cost Italian coach Giuseppe Dossena his

They repeatedly lost possession in midfield, showed no sense of urgency and were reduced to a couple of long shots as they failed to beat goalkeeper Andre

their best effort came when in Munich, defender Kuffour headed against the bar in the 49th minute. South Africa earned a trip to the semi-finals for Thursday's semifinalist the co-hosts Nigeria or

CAMEROON-ALGERIA Cameroon played some exciting football, but woeful defence and a few wild tackles

left question marks over their ability to win their first Nations' Cup since 1986. They took advantage of slack Algerian marking as Eto'o and Foe scored in the eighth and 24th minutes.

Algeria came back strongly, reduced the arrears when Abdelhakid Tassafout headed his second goal of the cup in the 79th minute and nearly equalised shortly afterwards, when the same player miscued his shot from close range.

Cameroon should have been out of sight by then but a string of misses, particularly one by

Salomon Olembe who missed an open goal at point blank range, kept the result in doubt. The indomitable Lions also displayed some of the reckless tackling which marred their last World Cup appearance with captain Rigobert Song, who has already earned the distinction of being sent off at two World Cups, lucky not to be dismissed for a sliding, two-footed challenge on Abdelaziz Benhamlet.

Surprisingly, Song was not even booked.

"We created a lot of chances, that is the positive side," said Cameroon coach Pierre Lechantre, whose team stay in Accra to play either Egypt or Tunisia on Thursday.

Algeria were less happy. "We didn't like the refereeing," said assistant coach Abdelghani Djadaoui. "If he had shown some more yellow cards in the first half, things might have been different."

The remaining quarter-finals kick off with holders Egypt playing Tunisia in the northern Nigerian city of Kano followed by the Nigeria-Senegal clash in Lagos.

"Having the right mental attitude and team spirit is what will decide the game," said Senegal coach Peter Schlittiger, whose side are rank outsiders.

"My players and I are here to create surprises. They are determined to give me memories of what I achieved 30 years ago," added the German, who led Ivory Coast to the semifinals in 1970.

Scottish Premiership Hibs, Rangers enjoy goalfest

GLASGOW, Feb 7: Glasgow Rangers were held 2-2 by Hibernian in a thrilling draw at Easter Road on Sunday with Neil McCann earning a point for the reigning champions with a goal nine minutes from time.

After a goalless first half, Hibernian took the lead through Kenny Miller before Rod Wallace equalised for the visitors, reports AFP.

Miller scored his fifth goal of the season to put the home side 2-1 up only for McCann to level the scores for the Scottish Premier leaders.

A point takes Dick Advocaat's side to 51 points in the table, 10 points clear of second-placed Celtic while Hibs jump above Hearts into fifth on 27.

Hibs took the lead four minutes after the break when Ian Murray played in a fine cross which was headed goalward by Mixu Paatelainen.

Rangers defender Craig Moore cleared it but only as far as Miller, who rifled a 12-yard shot beyond keeper Stefan Klos.

But Hibs' lead lasted only seven minutes with Rod Wallace bringing Rangers back into the match.

Moore delivered a glorious crossfield pass to Neil McCann, who had replaced Dodds at half-time.

The Scotland winger's delivery deceived a static Hibs defence and Wallace stooped to head the ball home and make it 1-1.

Rangers were rocked again in the 66th minute when Miller scored his second goal of the game after a mistake by Dutchman Arthur Numan.

His pass back to Klos was short and Miller nipped in and flicked the ball wide of the German keeper as Numan tried unsuccessfully to make up ground.

But with nine minutes left McCann secured a point for Rangers.

The former Hearts midfielder linked up with Barry Ferguson before unleashing a fierce shot past Nick Colgan to take Rangers another step closer to retaining the title.

WTA'S top 20 money winners

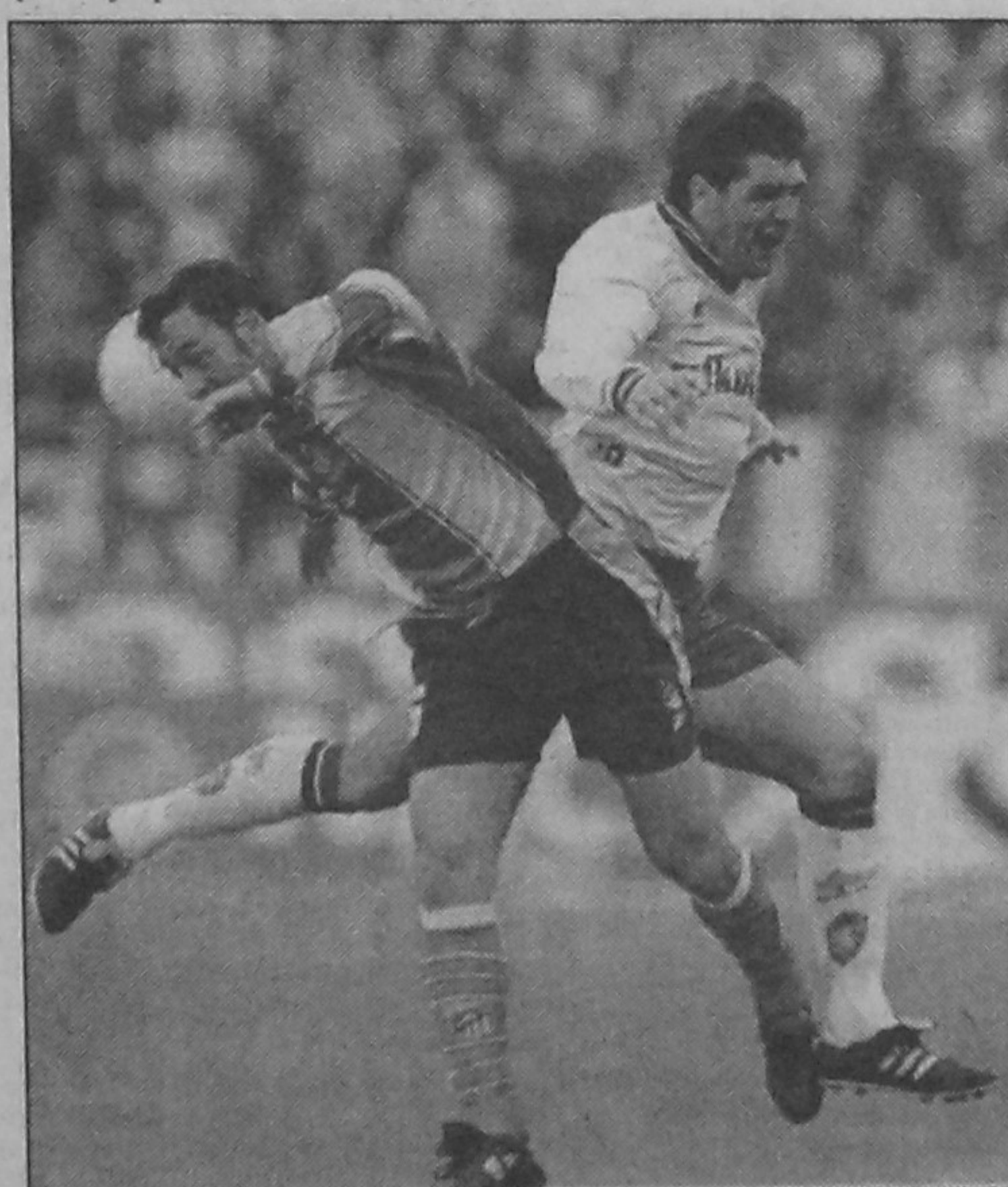
ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Feb 7 (Reuters): Top 20 money winners this year in women's tennis, according to WTA Tour:

1. Lindsay Davenport \$477,955
2. Martina Hingis 467,089
3. Rennae Stubbs 135,463
4. Conchita Martinez 127,164
5. Lisa Raymond 123,876
6. Sandrine Testud 122,396
7. Mary Pierce 120,217
8. Jennifer Capriati 116,417
9. Anna Kournikova 110,059
10. Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 91,879
11. Amelie Mauresmo 90,108
12. Ai Sugiyama 89,043
13. Julie Halard-Decugis 84,343
14. Elena Likhovtseva 73,545
15. Chanda Rubin 64,933
16. Katarina Srebotnik 58,436
17. Barbara Schett 55,331
18. Amanda Coetzer 53,311
19. Corina Morariu 47,322
20. Nathalie Tauziat 47,308

CAF rates Group C best

KANO, Nigeria, Feb 7: The Confederation of African Football (CAF) on Sunday said Group C was the best pool of first round matches of the ongoing continental tournament in Nigeria and Ghana, reports AFP.

Kano official Alhaji Kabiru Baiti added the group, which consisted of Egypt, Zambia, Burkina Faso and Senegal, was also the best attended. "CAF's statistics of all first round matches have shown that Kano centre has the best technical and attendance record so far in the championship," Baiti said.



Atletico Madrid's Santi (L) and Jordi of Real Zaragoza are engaged in a battle for possession during their Primera Liga encounter on February 6. —AFP photo

Olympic soccer Chile block Argentina's route

LONDRINA, Brazil, Feb 7: A goal four minutes from time by Reinaldo Navia handed Chile a 1-0 win over Argentina here on Sunday and knocked the Argentines out of the South American Olympic qualifying tournament, reports AFP.

Brazil, who had already drawn against Uruguay on Sunday night to top the group. They go to Sydney with the Chileans.

A 30,000 crowd saw the Brazilians lead after just four minutes but Uruguay, still behind at the break, stormed back and Risso and Varela had them 2-1 in front by the hour mark.

However, Fabio Junior rescued Brazil with the equaliser three minutes before the end.

Brazil topped the group with seven points from their three matches with Chile on seven. Argentina finished with three and Uruguay one.

Norwegian eves edge out USA

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida, Feb 7: Dagny Mellgren's shot seconds into injury time gave Norway a 3-2 win over the United States Sunday, spoiling April Heinrichs' debut as coach of the US women's team, reports AFP.

Norway leveled the score in the friendly at 2-2 in the 81st minute, when US goalkeeper Saskia Webber failed to catch a long cross from the left wing and the ball bounded into the net off the head of American defender Carla Overback.

Mellgren's goal, a well-placed shot from 20 yards out on the right, marked a change of fortune for Heinrichs, who played her final international match as a player against Norway when she captained Team USA to the 1991 Women's World Cup title.

Norway's Heger Reese converted a 20th-minute penalty to open the scoring, but the US took a 2-1 lead thanks to goals from veterans Mia Hamm and Kristine Lilly.

The match marked the 2000 domestic debut for the reigning World Cup and Olympic champions.

Recently the US Soccer Federation settled a contract dispute with the team. The partnership guarantees payroll parity with the men's team, including a fee of 2,000 dollars per game and balancing the women's bonus compensation with that of the men for appearances in major tournaments and victories against top opponents.

Another feather in Kipketer's cap

STUTTGART, Germany, Feb 7: Dane Wilson Kipketer issued an early Olympic warning as he broke the 1,000 metres indoor world record in two minutes 15.25 seconds yesterday, reports Reuters.

The three-time 800 metres outdoor world champion, who has yet to win an Olympic gold over the distance, bettered the old mark by one hundredth of a second.

The previous best of 2:15.26 was set by Algerian Noureddine Morceli in February 1992 in Birmingham.

Kenyan-born Kipketer who holds the 800 metres outdoor world record set the first world record of a busy year which will culminate with the Sydney Olympics.

"I haven't been doing so good in training lately and I've had a few injury worries," he said. "I didn't think I could do it but the atmosphere was great and that helped me."

"It's nice to have a record, it's nice for the people here but my main goal this year is an Olympic gold medal. That's something I really want."

Kipketer was helped by a brave challenge from Kenya's Kennedy Kimwetich who pushed him all the way to the line.

Hungarian Balazs Kornyit set the pace for the first 600 metres. Kipketer then broke away, followed by Kimwetich, and the two men raced the last 400 metres well ahead of the rest of the field.

Kipketer first thought he had only equalled the world record as the Stuttgart stadium's board showed 2:15.26. But the time was then adjusted to 2:15.25.

Romanian's Gabriela Szabo failed badly in her attempt to break the 10-year-old mile record of 4:17.14 set by compatriot Donita Melinte.

Szabo, the 5,000 metres world champion, was made to work hard by Poland's Lidia Ciolek before outstripping her to win in 4:39.90.

Moroccan minister seeks Saudi support

RIYADH, Feb 7: Morocco's Minister for Youth and Sport, Ahmad Mussawi, held talks with Saudi officials here Sunday on his country's bid for the 2006 World Cup, reports AFP.

Mussawi, touring the Gulf Arab states to seek backing for the bid, met Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz and the head of the kingdom's sports and youth organisation, Prince Sultan bin Fahd, the official news agency SPA said.

African Football Confederation (CAF) president Issa Hayatou last week called on either South Africa or Morocco to pull out of their World Cup race to allow the continent to put forward a single candidate.

The 2006 decision will be taken by FIFA's 24-strong executive committee, which includes Hayatou, in Zurich next week. It pits the two African countries against England, Germany and Brazil.

Davis Cup

USA, Australia prevail



UNDATED, Feb 7 (Internet report): Davis Cup debutant Chris Woodruff saved the USA's Davis Cup hopes as a dramatic weekend saw 1999 runners-up France knocked out and defending champions Australia pushed all the way.

The 1999 winners came from 2-1 behind to Switzerland -- with Mark Philippoussis winning the deciding rubber -- to

USA-ZIMBABWE Chris Woodruff's 6-3, 6-7, 6-2, 6-4 win over Wayne Black on Sunday was ultimately crucial. But the final rubber would have been irrelevant if world No 1 Andre Agassi had not overcome Wayne's older brother Byron 6-2, 6-3, 7-6 to level the tie at 2-2.

Agassi had also beaten Wayne Black 7-5, 6-3, 7-5 on Friday, when Woodruff had lost to the old Zimbabwean brother 7-6, 6-3, 6-2.



US Davis Cup team captain John McEnroe (R) hugs Chris Woodruff after the latter won over Wayne Black of Zimbabwe in Harare on February 6. —AFP photo

clinch their place in the quarterfinals.

France joined Great Britain out of the tournament as Brazil won 4-1, a victory secured with a 3-0 scoreline on Saturday.

Britain lost 4-1 in the Czech Republic on Sunday.

The USA's reward for their win in Harare is a home tie with the Czech Republic, while the Brazilians travel to Slovakia, 3-2 conquerors of Austria.

Like Slovakia, Spain and Russia were also in the quarterfinals by Saturday night.

The Spanish, who eventually won 4-1 at home to Italy, will next meet the Russians, who enjoyed a similar result over Belgium.

Meanwhile Australia will travel to Germany, who were comfortable 4-1 winners over neighbours the Netherlands.

The USA fell behind after Saturday's doubles, when Wayne Black and Kevin Ullyett won a five-set thriller against Rick Leach and Alex O'Brien 7-6, 5-7, 6-6, 7-5, 7-5.

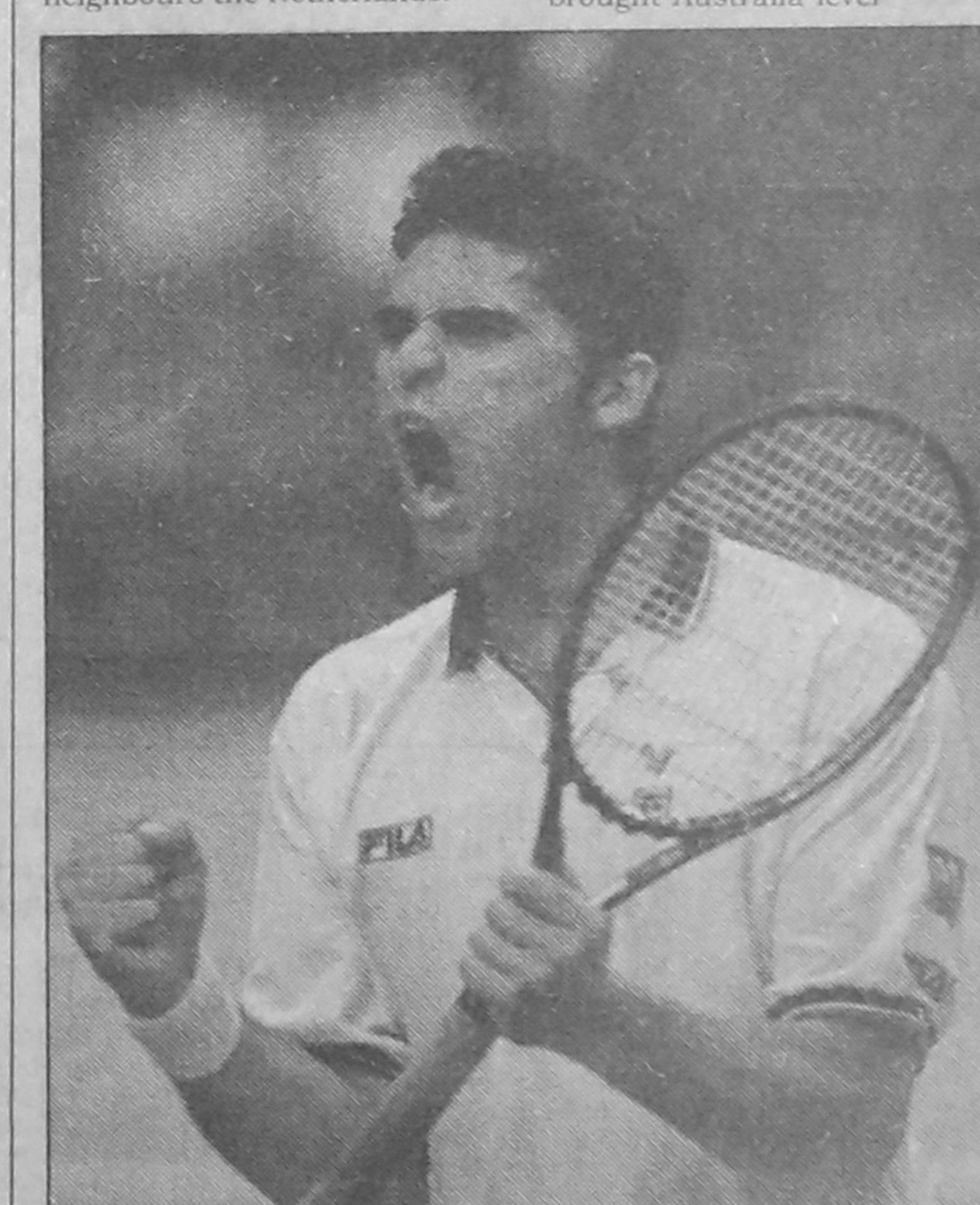
In Friday's opening singles Agassi beat Wayne Black 7-5, 6-3, 7-5 and Byron Black beat Woodruff 7-6, 6-3, 6-2.

AUSTRALIA-SWITZERLAND

Mark Philippoussis, hero of Australia's Davis Cup final victory two months ago, came to his country's rescue again on Sunday by beating Swiss George Bastl 6-7, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to clinch a 3-2 win.

Australia were trailing 2-1 at one point but Lleyton Hewitt hauled them level when he beat Roger Federer 6-2, 3-6, 7-6, 6-1.

Hewitt's win over Federer brought Australia level.



Australian Mark Philippoussis roars for joy after beating George Bastl of Switzerland in the Davis Cup in Zurich on February 6. The Aussies overcame the Swiss 3-2. —AFP photo

A loss would have been a big embarrassment for the defending champions.

Switzerland gained their shock lead courtesy of a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 doubles victory by Roger Federer and Lorenzo Mantovani over Wayne Arthurs and Sandon Stolle.

On Friday Hewitt beat Bastl 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 while Federer defeated Philippoussis 6-4, 7-6, 4-6, 6-4.

BRAZIL-FRANCE Brazil gained revenge for last year's quarterfinal defeat after Saturday's doubles.

Gustavo Kuerten and Jaime Oncins defeated Cedric Pioline and Nicolas Escude in straight sets 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

Fernando Meligeni had beaten Pioline 7-5, 5-7, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 in Friday's singles before Kuerten overcame Jerome Golmard 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Sunday's dead rubbers saw Brazil's Francisco Costa beat Arnaud Clement 7-6, 5-7, 6-2 but Escude rescued some French pride with a 2-6, 6-7 win over Kuerten.

CZECH REPUBLIC-BRITAIN

Britain lost their Davis Cup tie against the Czech Republic when Tim Henman slumped to a straight sets defeat to Jiri Novak to put the Czechs into an unassailable 3-1 lead in the tie.

Henman's 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 defeat rendered the scheduled final clash meaningless, but the Czechs won it anyway despite opting to play little-known Bohdan Ulihrach ahead of Slava Dosedel.

Ulihrach defeated Jamie Delgado 5-7, 7-5, 6-4.

Coach David Lloyd said the Czechs played fantastic tennis and deserved to win, especially on their favoured clay surface.

Britain will now play Zimbabwe in a play-off, which will see the losers relegated from the World Group.

GERMANY-NETHERLANDS

Tommy Haas clinched victory for Germany when he overcame Sjeng Schalken of the Netherlands 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 in the first of Sunday's reverse singles.

On Saturday German doubles pair David Prinosil and Marc-Kevin Goellner beat Dutch pair Paul Haarhuis and Jan Siemerink 4-6, 6-3, 7-6, 6-3 in Leipzig.

In Friday's opening singles Haas beat van John van Lotum 4-6, 7-6, 6-3, 6-2, before the Dutch came back with Schalken beating Schuttler 3-6, 7-6, 6-1, 6-0.

Rainer Schuttler gave Germany their fourth win in the dead rubber, with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Lotum.

SPAIN-ITALY

Spain's doubles pair Alex Corretja and Joan Balcells beat Andrea Gaudenzi and Diego Nargiso 6-4, 6-3, 6-1 for a 3-0 scoreline on Saturday.

On Friday Albert Costa beat Davide Sanguineti 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 before Corretja defeated Andrea Gaudenzi 4-6, 6-1, 6-1, 6-1.

Sunday's dead rubbers saw a sole victory for Italy when Gaudenzi beat Costa 5-7, 7-5, 6-4 but Francisco Clavet then beat Vincenzo Santopadre, 6-7, 6-1, 6-3 to hand Spain a 4-1 win.

RUSSIA-BELGIUM

Russia progressed on Saturday when Marat Safin and Andrei Cherkasov beat Christophe and Olivier Rochus 4-6, 7-6, 1-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Safin had already beaten Christophe Rochus in Friday's singles, 7-5, 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 while Yevgeny Kafelnikov beat Filip Dewulf 6-7, 6-4, 7-5, 6-2.

Russia threatened a whitewash when Mikhail Yuzhny beat Olivier Rochus in the first dead rubber 7-6, 6-2.

But Dewulf salvaged some pride for the visitors with a 6-0, 4-6, 6-1 over Cherkasov.

SLOVAKIA-AUSTRIA

The crucial blow here also came on Saturday when Karol Kucera and Dominik Hrbaty beat Austria's Julian Knowle and Alexander Peya 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

Kucera had already sailed through his opening singles against Markus Hipfl 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 while Hrbaty was similarly dominant over Stefan Koubek with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 win.

Austria won both the dead rubbers as the top Slovaks were rested and Jan Krosak lost 6-3, 6-2 to Koubek, while Hipfl beat Ladislav Svarc 6-2, 6-4.

QTRS FIXTURES

USA v Czech Rep
Spain v Russia
Slovak Rep v Brazil
Germany v Australia
(Matches to be played from April 7-9)

Diego back on soccering track!

HAVANA, Feb 7: Overweight, unshaven, sporting dark glasses and hair dyed orange-blond, Argentine soccer idol Diego Maradona trotted onto a cup final pitch on Sunday -- but as an ailing guest celebrity rather than as a player, reports Reuters.

The 39-year-old star kicked off the national soccer championship final in communist-ruled Cuba, where he has been under treatment for cocaine addiction since Jan. 18.

"I am very proud to be here in this stadium and to be able to enjoy this Cuban soccer final," Maradona, wearing shorts, tennis shoes and a blue sports shirt told reporters before punting the ball into the air with his right foot.

Accompanied by his father, he then watched the local cup final in which Pinar del Rio beat Havana City 2-1.

Maradona, once one of the greatest attacking players in soccer who left defenders wallowing in his wake with pulsing bursts of speed and deft ball skills, looked badly out of shape.

Chewing gum and burdened with a bulging belly, he could

manage little more than a shambling, shuffling run when he appeared on the pitch of Havana's Pedro Marrero stadium.

He failed to escape a horde of journalists, photographers and camera crews who mobbed him from the moment he set foot in the stadium, where he was greeted with a roar from several thousand Cuban fans.

It was a rare public appearance for Maradona, who had checked into an exclusive state-run Cuban health complex on the outskirts of Havana nearly three weeks ago, suffering from hypertension and an irregular heart beat.

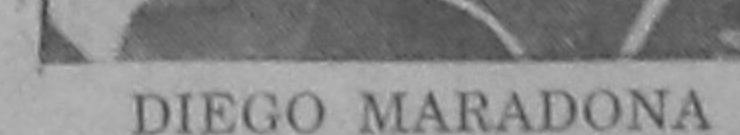
The former Argentine team captain is an admirer of Cuban President Fidel Castro who has visited him at his hotel.

Last Friday, he announced he was willing to lend his expertise to help the development of soccer in Cuba, where baseball is the main national sport.

"The baseball people are going to throw balls at me, but I want soccer to become the number one sport in Cuba and we can achieve that between us all," he told Cuban sports officials and soccer players in Havana.

At the same Friday meeting, he said he would like to start playing again but was still too ill.

Soccer is a passion, it's like loving your mother. But I've got a little problem with my heart. But I see a ball and I want to play. I am desperate, desperate to play but the doctors won't let me yet," Maradona said.



DIEGO MARADONA