

Sport

Ronaldo, Romario friends again!

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 23: After a year and a half of silence the two Brazilian football giants Ronaldo and Romario are back on talking terms again, the local press reported here Monday, reports AFP.

The pair, who fell out at the 1998 World Cup finals in Paris and have not uttered one word to each other since, were reconciled at a birthday party here on Saturday night.

A rift developed between the players when Romario was upset at Inter Milan's Ronaldo for not supporting him when then Brazilian coach Mario Zagallo dropped him on the eve of the World Cup.

Romario was suffering from a thigh injury but claimed he would be fit in time for the finals yet his assurances fell on deaf ears.

Put out Romario then wasted no opportunity to criticise Ronaldo's performance in the finals in his role as a guest television commentator.

But all that was forgotten at Saturday's orchestrated get-together when Romario approached his countryman and said: "Come back to Brazil and play at Vasco (De Gama) with me. You'll see you're going to become the best in the world."

Ronaldo, a committed fan of Rio De Janeiro club Flamengo, retorted: "No, you'll see, it's me who's going to bring you to Flamengo."

The idea to get the players to make up came from Ronaldo's advisors Reinaldo Pitta and Alexandre Martins.

Ronaldo on Monday started a grueling course of treatment on his right knee, operated on in Paris last month, at Teresopolis, 80 kilometres from Rio.

He is due to remain at the centre until March 5 under the care of his physiotherapists Nilton Petrone and Rodrigo Paiva and from Friday Pietro Volpi, Internazionale's team doctor.

Ronaldo is then due to return to Paris for one last check up before resuming his playing career.

Ronaldinho not for sale

BRASILIA, Feb 23 (Reuters/Internet): Leeds United have offered Brazilian club Gremio \$1 million for striker Ronaldinho, president Jose Alberto Guerreiro told a Sunday newspaper.

A Leeds spokesman later denied the story, saying "it hadn't even been considered".

Guerreiro said his team in Rio Grande do Sul state would not sell the 19-year-old striker for any price.

"It makes no difference if they offer dollars 5 million or dollars 100 million. Gremio are not interested in selling the player,"

Guerreiro was quoted as saying in Folha do Sao Paulo on Sunday. Folha claimed that Barcelona last week offered dollars 71 million for Ronaldinho.

The paper also quoted the striker's mother, Miguelina Assis, saying she had asked Guerreiro not to send her son overseas.

"I don't want him to be with my care just yet," she said. She added her family were living comfortably on Ronaldinho's monthly salary of 50,000 reais (dollars 28,105).

Ronaldinho rose to international recognition last year when he helped Brazil win the Copa America.

After the event, Real Madrid reportedly offered Gremio dollars 27 million for the player.

"I'm feeling very well," he

Benitez's future in doubt

BARCELONA, Feb 23 (Reuters/Internet): Espanyol's Paraguayan international striker Miguel Angel Benitez will be out of action for up to a year, his club said on Monday.

Benitez snapped ligaments in his right knee, and also fractured his leg, early in the match against Atletico Madrid

on Sunday after a tackle by compatriot Celso Ayala. "It's tragic, we are good friends," Ayala said.

Espanyol said earlier on Monday the player would be out for the rest of the season but the diagnosis was worse after a further examination.

Espanyol club doctor Ramon Cugat also raised the possibility the Paraguayan star of the 1998 World Cup finals and 1999 Copa America might be forced to retire.

Cugat said Benitez was being checked for nerve damage around his right knee and the results would not be known for several days. However, he said if the findings were negative it could mean the end of Benitez's career as a professional.

His injury is a big blow to the Barcelona-based club in their fight to avoid relegation.

Benitez, with the club for four seasons, is Espanyol's leading scorer this season with seven goals.

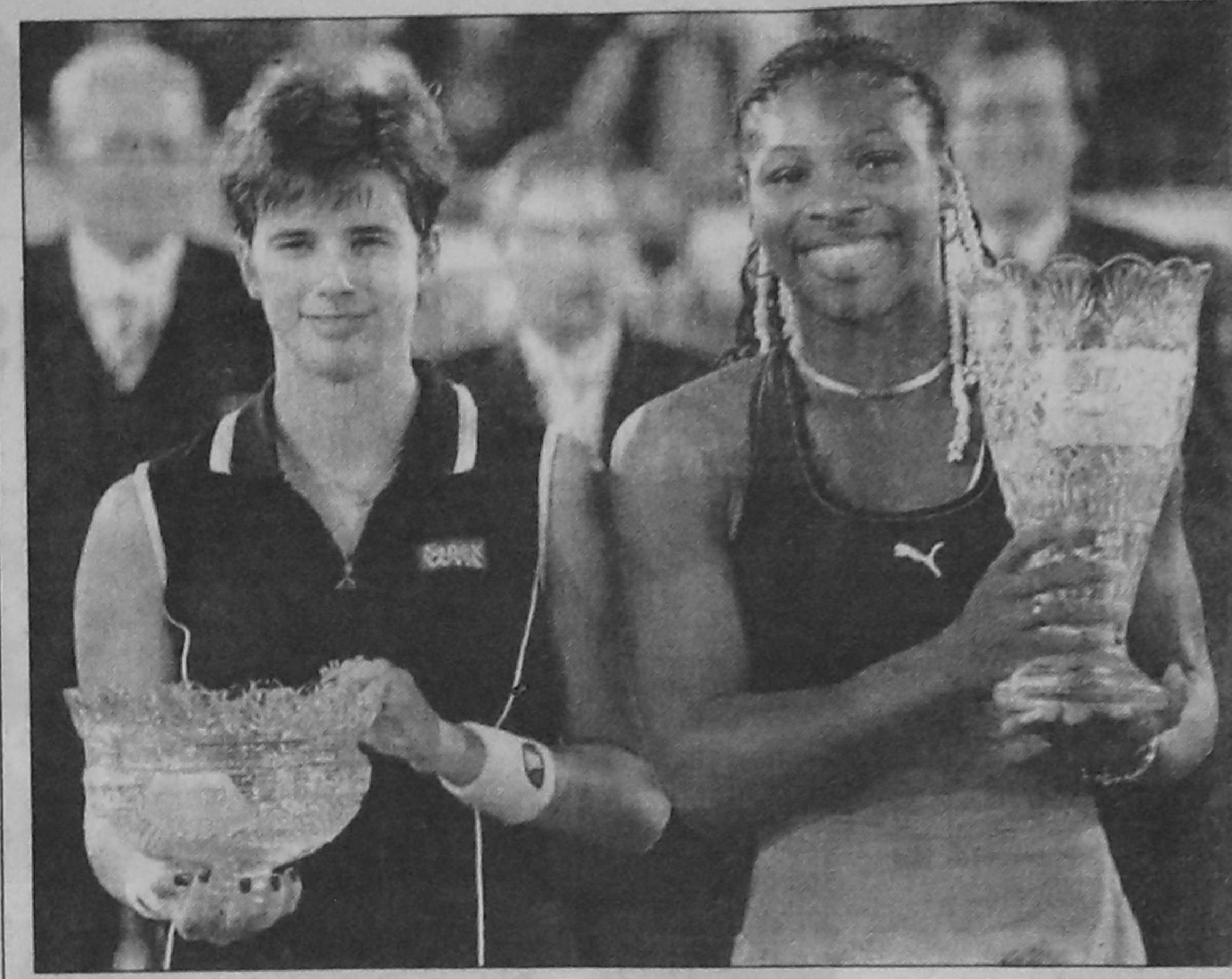
IGA Classic tennis

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb 22: Sixth-seeded Lisa Raymond beat Zimbabwe's Cara Black 6-3, 6-7, 7-6 to advance to the second round of the 180,000 dollars IGA SuperThrift Classic, reports AP.

"I came out playing extremely well and then fell asleep for a few games," Raymond said Monday night. "I stopped coming to the net and being aggressive. The next thing you know she's coming back and we're in a 2/12-hour battle."

In the second round, Raymond, who is ranked 27th in the world, will face Corina Morariu, who beat Kristina Brandi 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 in the last match of the evening.

Yesterday's answer



American Serena Williams (R) and opponent Denis Chladkova of the Czech Republic holding their champion's and runner-up's trophies respectively after the final of the Hanover Grand Prix on February 20.

— AFP photo

Williams wins Hanover GP

easy points from the opening game, gaining five breaks against the Czech player in the one-sided affair.

Her own serve was so dominating, she won many games at love as she added a 87,000 dollars check to her career earnings, which broke the 3 million dollars mark as she reached the final last week at Paris.

The US Open champion

showed none of her recent

rustiness in her third tournament following a long layoff.

She needed just 46 minutes to close out the 6-1, 6-1 win at the 535,000 dollars event.

Williams' dominance

spoiled the bid of Chladkova,

ranked 56th, to become the lowest-ranked player in 18 years to capture a large tournament.

"I didn't have such a great

day, but she played excellently,"

said Chladkova, whose only

other final came at Knock-

Heit.

Williams hammered Chlad-

kova's weaker second serve for

different winner in as many women's tournaments this season.

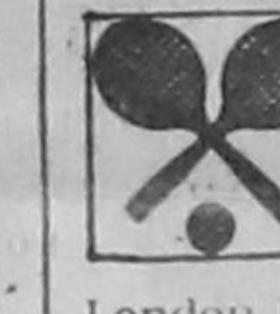
The 18-year-old American had soared into the world Top 5 last year by capturing five titles, but had taken a break from October to January 17. Since coming back, she has reached the fourth round of the Australian Open and last week's final in Paris, where she lost to France's Nathalie Tauziat.

"There is a lot of incentive to win after last week — I'm definitely looking forward to it," said Williams before the match.

Before Chladkova's forehand sailed long to end the match, the crowd began clapping loudly for the Czech outsider at times, hoping the 21-year-old could still turn it into a competitive match.

Chladkova jumped from 134th to 57th last year and now has reached four semifinals to go along with her two lost finals.

Rusedski breezes thru'



LONDON, Feb 22: Britain's Greg Rusedski eased his way into the second round of the 800,000 dollar London Indoor Open ATP Tour here yesterday at the expense of Frenchman Arnaud Clement, reports AFP.

It took Rusedski just 64 minutes to brush aside Clement 6-3, 6-4 at London Arena and, after his early-season injury problems, the 26-year-old is keen to make this his 10th ATP Tour career title.

Runner-up last year when the tournament was staged at Battersea, Canadian-born Rusedski put on a commanding performance in front of the noisy but barely half-full Arena.

"I'm feeling very well," he

said. "My tennis has improved. It needs a little work but I'm moving well around court."

"Hopefully, I can go one step further and win the tournament this week."

However, if the left-hander is to advance to the quarter-finals and beyond, it looks likely that he will have to conquer British rival Tim Henman.

The duo are scheduled to meet in the last eight but Rusedski refused to be drawn on the showdown. "He has two more matches to play. I have one," said the British number two.

Clement 22, was beaten almost as much by his own temperament as by his opponent. He objected to a series of line calls, but Rusedski refused to be drawn into any mind games.

Based in Marseille, Clement is more at home on clay and the hard indoor surface did not suit his game.

Rusedski took charge early on, forcing his opponent to go for extravagant passing shots which the Briton was frequently able to put away at the net.

He only needed to break Clement's serve once in the first set, and with the score at 5-3 he followed up a second-serve ace with another wickedly spinning clean service winner before a deep volley and a wayward Clement forehand gave him the set.

Three consecutive breaks of serve opened the second set, handing Rusedski a 2-1 advantage before he became the first to hold.

At 4-1 and 40-15 up on Clement's serve, the match looked all over. But the Frenchman valiantly fought back to hold before breaking again to bring himself within a game of Rusedski.

"I should have put the game away to make it 5-1," said Rusedski, who served 12 aces al-

together. "But I can't complain with 6-3, 6-4 after breaking my opponent three times in the second set."

"He's a good player and it's a good result. I'd have liked to come off court a little sooner than I did today, but I'm getting through my best tennis when I have to."

"I'm feeling quite healthy and I'm feeling quite good about myself."

Henman's first round opponent is Argentinian 21-year-old Mariano Zabaleta while wildcard Jamie Delgado of Britain takes on Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman.

In the tournament's opener, Czech giant Daniel Vacek cruised past Bjorkman's compatriot Thomas Johansson 6-3, 6-2 in 66 minutes, while seventh seed Dominik Hrbaty beat Andrei Pavel 6-4, 6-3.

France's Fabrice Santoro then went on to beat Russian Marat Safin 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

WTA rankings

MIAMI, Florida, Feb 22 (AFP): Latest WTA rankings on Monday:

Player	points
Hingis	5734
Davenport	5190
V Williams	3903
S Williams	3512
Tauziat	2550
Pierce	2467
Halar-Decugis	2025
Martinez	1981
Kournikova	1908
Testud	1771
Sanchez-Vicario	1768
Schett	1766
Mauresmo	1760
Seles	1713
Capriati	1556
Coetzer	1487
Likhotsheva	1435
Huber	1458
Van Roost	1388
Rubin	1239

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 Diving	3 Hit	25 Mischievous
1 King of Siam's employee	42 Tyke	4 Assault	26 Loch Ness
5 Tavern	45 Muffet's frightener	5 Tubular weapon?	27 Monster, e.g.?
8 Theatrical goer's souvenir	49 State	6 Guitar's relative	28 Palindromic potentate?
12 Capricorn prop	50 Owns	7 Bob's pal	29 Spectacles?
13 Biathlon	52 Paddock	8 Light reddish brown	30 Seek damages
14 Fairy tale	53 Options	9 Outdoor restaurants?	31 Depot (Abbr.)
15 Send forth	54 Singer Lemper	10 Incite invaders	36 Nicosia's country
16 Coop occupant	55 Soft cheese	11 #1 Doctor	37 Ball-bearing gadz
17 Algo's "before"	56 Picnic	12 #007	38 With hands on hips
18 Presidential mom	57 —	13 Plains who opposed 007	41 Out of bed
20 Attila's call	14 Dillarod	14 Director Craven	42 —
22 Dove's call	15 Manx cat	15 terminus	Remember —
23 Make one feature	16 Dior	16 Solution time: 22 mins.	43 It takes the cake
27 Manx cat	17 Start	20 Movie	44 Sound of dull impact
32 Type units	18 Rump	21 Hole-making tool	45 "Nuts"
33 16- Across' product	19 Start	22 Director	46 Canal zone
34 Enthusiast	20 Start	23 terminus	48 Roger of "Cheers"
35 Cruising	21 Start	24 Movie	51 Noshed
36 Reuben holder	22 Start	25 Director	Yesterday's answer
	23 Start	26 terminus	

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