

## England will recall that fateful day

LONDON, Mar 4: English football is due to pay a mark of respect to the victims of the Hillsborough tragedy who died 11 years ago, England's Football Association (FA) said on Friday, reports AFP.

On Saturday April 15, English Premiership matches will kick off at 3.07pm as a tribute to the 96 Liverpool fans who died on that day in 1989, crushed to death during the FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest.

There will also be a minute's silence before the start of matches on the anniversary. Football League clubs will also be showing their respect for the dead of English football's worst tragedy.

It was at 3.07pm on April 15 1989 that the semi-final was halted and the full extent of the tragedy at the Leppings Lane end of Hillsborough began to emerge.

The announcement follows a proposal from the FA for the anniversary to be marked in a significant way.

Senior FA officials were recently in touch with representatives of the Hillsborough relatives before making their proposal to the clubs.

The FA's executive director David Davies said: "The Hillsborough tragedy shocked football throughout the world."

## Lothar dwells on playing in Dubai

MUNICH, Mar 4: Bayern Munich's German international libero Lothar Matthaus, who will move to New York outfit MetroStars on March 10, is considering playing in Dubai after his stint in the States, he told Saturday's edition of the deutsche Zeitung, reports AFP.

Matthaus said: "Perhaps I will stay longer in the United States but perhaps I will also do something totally different like for example go to Dubai, who have made me a very good offer."

Today Matthaus will play Stuttgart in what is likely to be his 464th and last Bundesliga match before he goes to the States.

But West Germany's 1990 World Cup winning captain and former FIFA world-player-of-the-year was only thinking about the future when he said: "New York will be a luxury for me. Of course I could say to myself: 'You could have stayed three more months at Bayern until the end of the season.' But no, I have made my decision and I will stick to it."

# More than just any game



SARAJEVO, Mar 4 (AFP): An honourable draw between two football clubs from the southern Bosnian town of Mostar, played out at Sarajevo city stadium, is being seen here as a step towards reunifying the bitterly divided city.

Muslim Velez of Mostar and Croatian Zrinjski drew 2-2 in a friendly game Wednesday in Sarajevo, after US ambassador to Bosnia, Thomas Miller, took the kick-off.

It was the first match between the two Mostar teams since the beginning of Bosnia's 1992-95 war.

"We shared the scores as we share power in the city (Mostar)," said one of Velez's supporters who would not give his name.

While broadcasting the match, Bosnian television ran a slogan saying that the game was a step towards the unification of the city.

Divisions in Mostar started in 1993 following the start of the war between Croats and Muslims. More than four years after the war ended, power in the city remains equally shared between the wartime enemies.

"This game should have been played in Mostar," the veteran Velez goalkeeper, Enver Maric, was reported saying in the Sarajevo daily Dnevni Avaz.

"I would like to believe that this game is a sign of a better life in Mostar," Maric added.

Velez supporters saw the game as a result of the political change in neighbouring Croatia where hardliners lost power in January polls, for the first time since the first free elections in 1990.

During the match they shouted the name of the newly elected moderate Croatian president Stipe Mesic.

Several hundred Velez supporters from Mostar, decked out in the club's red strip, came to Sarajevo to watch the game.

Velez, which was among the

ten best clubs in the former Yugoslavia, lost its home stadium in the war. Their Bjeli Brijeg stadium remains under Croatian control.

"Now that (the late Croatian president Franjo) Tudjman is gone, we expect to play in Bjeli Brijeg soon," said Necko, a Velez supporter who came to Sarajevo to watch the game.

Fans of Zrinjski, founded during Bosnia's war, were not seen at the game.

"If the game had been played in Zagreb (Croatia), Velez supporters would not have come either," Necko said.

The two teams were to meet in 1999, but the game was cancelled after the sides failed to agree on the venue.

Each of Bosnia's three ethnic communities — Croats, Muslims and Serbs — has its own league, one reason why Bosnian clubs are not allowed to participate in European cup competitions.

However, 2000 is the first year when teams from all three leagues will meet in a play-off game, the first step towards a joint league.

Another veteran Velez player, Vahid Halilhodzic said that sport in Bosnia could contribute to the reconciliation process in the country more than the politicians did.



NOSTALGIA: Superstar Ronaldo (L) and Jose Henrique (R) of Sao Cristovao Youth Soccer Club shake hands during the Brazil and Inter Milan striker's visit to the Rio club on March 3. Ronaldo began his career with Sao Cristovao. —AFP photo

# Sir Stanley cremated



STOKE-ON-TRENT, England, Mar 4 (AFP): One of England's greatest footballers, Sir Stanley Matthews was cremated here Friday after an estimated 100,000 mourners in his hometown of Stoke-on-Trent had turned out to say farewell to their most famous son.

That number of people would have filled Wembley when Matthews was a player although the capacity of the na-

tional stadium has since been reduced.

The cremation followed a religious service — the coffin was borne into church by four more English footballing legends, 1966 World Cup winners Sir Bobby Charlton and Gordon Banks, former England forward Nat Lofthouse and another legendary former England winger Sir Tom Finney.

And the people of Stoke were allowed to bid farewell to Sir Stanley with the cortege taking a long and winding route including a trip around the perimeter of Stoke's Britannia Stadium and a visit to the site of Stoke's now demolished former home the Victoria Ground, where Matthews starred as a player.

It also passed his former school in Wellington Road where Sir Stanley had started playing football, using coats for goalposts. On one occasion he was given sixpence by his headmaster for scoring eight goals for his school team in a 13-2 win.

Matthews died last week in hospital after a short illness at the age of 85.

His career was remarkable for many reasons. He won 54 England caps, was named 1956 European Footballer of the Year and, perhaps most remarkably, retired still at the top of his profession at the age of 50 in 1965 — no other leading player has come close to that landmark.

That year he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II — in those days a virtually unprecedented honour for a sportsman.

In retirement Matthews was something of a globetrotter. He coached in places as far apart as Malta and the South African township Soweto where he was known as "the black man with a white face".

A moving moment during the funeral service at St Peter's Church when his grandson Matthew Gough read the famous poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling.

Several hundred Stoke fans had been allowed to fill the gallery of the Church and draped their scarves in Stoke's red-and-white colours over the balcony but 100,000 were estimated to have lined the funeral route.

It is a measure of his standing in his home town that so

many people turned out to bid farewell to a player.

Local resident Ellen Garside, 50, said: "It's a very sad day for the inhabitants of Stoke. Sir Stanley was synonymous with Stoke, we had him in our skin as if he was like a King. I don't think we would grieve as much even if the Queen had died."

Stoke is part of the conurbation of towns known in England as the Potteries, which have built their wealth on the china industry since the industrial revolution.

Sir Stanley was also briefly manager of the other professional club in the Potteries, Port Vale.

But whether names such as Josiah Wedgwood may be famous to connoisseurs of fine porcelain and china it is doubtful whether any of the pioneering craftsmen had the worldwide recognition of Sir Stanley.

It is perhaps a measure of the standing of Sir Stanley that the two clubs for which he starred — Stoke and Blackpool — have sunk into lower division obscurity in the intervening years.

The faded banner tied to the railings outside Stoke's modern Britannia Stadium summed up perfectly how the fans felt about the so-called Wizard of Dribble — "We love you, Stan."

The thousands of Stoke City fans were dressed in their Stoke shirts and scarves, to pay their final respects to Sir Stanley Matthews.

Leading English comedian Nick Hancock, himself a Stoke City fan, claimed Sir Stanley had done more to put the region on the map than even the famous potteries.

"When you went abroad and said you were from the Potteries, people would say they'd never heard of that," he said.

"But when you said Sir Stan, they everyone had heard of him."

"I've been to Iran, and my wife is Iranian, and that's happened."

"He was a global name in the age before global communications."

"People all over the world had heard of him and he was like a mythical figure almost."

# Zoltan zaps Hamburg



FRANKFURT, Mar 4: Zoltan Sebesen scored a hat-trick and led a spectacular comeback by Wolfsburg, who over-

came a three-goal deficit to earn a 4-1 draw with Hamburg SV in a Bundesliga match Friday, reports AP.

In another match, Freiburg was held to a 1-1 draw by bottom-placed Arminia Bielefeld.

Hamburg, led 3-0 and 4-1 and survived a furious finish by Wolfsburg, got two goals apiece from Mehdi Mahdavi and Rodolfo Cardoso.

With the away draw, Hamburg stayed in third place but lost some ground to Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen, who play Saturday.

Sebesen made his national team debut last week in a 2-1 defeat in the Netherlands and was lambasted in the media as the chief culprit for Germany's dismal display.

But Sebesen redeemed him-

self Friday by standing out in an exciting match.

It was hard work, but we really fought for each other and with a bit more luck we could have won," Sebesen said. "I wanted to show on the field what I can do. I was under a lot of pressure but I never lost my self-confidence."

Mahdavi spearheaded a stellar performance by Hamburg in the first half-time.

The Iranian opened the scoring in the ninth minute and Cardoso, the Argentine midfielder, made it 2-0 in the 21st as Hamburg tore apart Wolfsburg's defense on a slippery pitch.

Mahdavi got his second in the 41st, after Wolfsburg goalkeeper Claus Reitmaier had punched out his header attempt. Mahdavi got the rebound and slotted it home.

Two minutes before half-time Sebesen got his first, rising at the far post to head home a free-kick cross.

Cardoso made it 4-1 in the

## Rafter fails to progress

DELRAY BEACH, Florida, Mar 4: Patrick Rafter's comeback after a six-month layoff from tennis stalled in the quarterfinals of the Citrix Tennis Championships Friday night when the Australian lost 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 to American Paul Goldstein, reports Reuters.

Playing in his first singles match since right rotator cuff surgery last autumn, the top-seeded Rafter was worn down by constant baseline rallies, especially long backhand duels that most often ended to Goldstein's advantage.

In another surprising upset Friday, fifth-seeded Chris Woodruff was ousted by qualifier Alex Calatrava of Spain 6-7 (7-9), 6-3, 6-2.

## Lennox may lose his WBA belt

NEW YORK, Mar 4: The World Boxing Association (WBA) will hold a meeting on Monday to decide whether to strip undisputed heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis of its version of the title, reports Reuters.

The WBA, according to a c of Lewis lawyers, says Lewis must fight its number-one contender Johnny Ruiz as a WBA mandatory defence before fighting Michael Grant as scheduled in April.

Lewis won the undisputed championship last November when he outpointed Evander Holyfield in a rematch of their highly-controversial draw of a year earlier.

## US eves' soccer league beckons

CHICAGO, Mar 4: United States Soccer set in motion an application process that will lead to a United States women's league that would pay for top female football talent from around the world, reports AFP.

Groups interested in league formation must give notice by April 1 and file a plan by May 1 with the US federation, which then will sanction one group to organize a league that could begin play as early as next year.

The move comes in the wake of success from last year's Women's World Cup in US cities. The Americans beat China in a penalty-kick shootout for the title, a run that captivated US fans in a way men's soccer never has.

The Women's United Soccer Association has already applied for rights to field a league, saying it would draw on worldwide stars for its teams.

## Trinidad torments Reid

LAS VEGAS, Mar 4: Undeclared Felix Trinidad of Puerto Rico survived a third-round knockout and three points deducted for low blows and won the World Boxing Association super welterweight championship Friday night on a unanimous decision over previously unbeaten David Reid of the United States, reports Reuters.

The win kept Trinidad in position for a bout against American Oscar De La Hoya in June, a rematch of a multi-million light the Puerto Rican won by a close decision here last September.

## Stacy sets new pole vault mark

ATLANTA, Mar 4: Stacy Dragila bettered her own world women's pole vaulting record by one centimetre to earn a bonus of 50,000 dollars at the USA Indoor Championships on Friday, but she was aiming even higher, reports Reuters.

Dragila, 28, set the new mark at 4.62 metres (15 feet 1 3/4 inches) but missed her three attempts at 4.70 (15 feet 5 inches) at the Georgia Dome.

"The money's bonus," said Dragila, who had set the previous mark of 4.61 (15 feet 1 1/2) in her hometown of Pocatello, Idaho, on February 19, bettering the record she shared with Australian Emma George by a centimetre.

Hamburg was lucky to escape with a draw after Wolfsburg missed several late chances.

Freiburg had to come back against Arminia Bielefeld, who went ahead in the 18th through captain Bruno Labbadia. Stefan Mueller scored the equalizer in the 61st.

# Of love matches off-court



SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Mar 4 (AFP/Internet): Love is bursting out all over the tennis world. And

it's game, set and match for some of the sport's biggest names.

Ten tennis star Anna Kournikova is getting married, even though the news had to be broken by Pavel Bure, her ice-

her web site denying British and German reports she was marrying in June, she and men's number one Andre Agassi are photographed arm-in-arm nearly everywhere.

So what do you get for the power sports couple who has everything?

"Hopefully I'll get invited if it takes place," said US Davis Cup captain John McEnroe. "What to get is the least of my worries right now. They already have everything between them. Maybe I'll get them a nice piece of art."

Kournikova accepted fellow Russian Bure's proposal one week ago in a South Miami Beach restaurant before a stunned dinner crowd.

Bure, 28, confessed Kournikova said yes before a NHL game on Monday and said details would be coming in mid-March when Kournikova returns to Miami for a tournament after playing this week and the next two in California.

The news brings heartbreak to males worldwide. Kournikova makes millions of dollars from advertising endorsements and her beauty has drawn stares from fans.

"For me she is the only reason to be here," said spectator Alex Rivera. "Everything about her is beautiful."

Kournikova's allure lured Shawn Kennedy, 20, to his first pro tennis event.

"She is it. I just had to come and watch her," he said. "I can't explain it. Her smile gets to me. There's no one like Anna."

Kubina plays near the US residence of Hingis, who turns 20 in September. He said they are just getting to know each

other. "We're close friends," Kubina said. "We've played tennis a few times and gone to movies and dinner."

Love is not only for the teen set. Agassi has had actress-model Brooke Shields and actress-singer Barbra Streisand cheering from the friends and family boxes in past years before Graf took up residence there.

Graf said there are no wedding plans after hundreds of well-wishers sent her e-mails, calling the reports a media fabrication to boost circulation.

Premature marriage reports indeed could prove embarrassing. But then again, love means never having to say you're sorry.



MARTINA HINGIS

hockey star beau and Miami neighbour.

Not to be outdone, world number one Martina Hingis has been dating Pavel Kubina, a defenceman for the National Hockey League's Tampa Bay Lightning.

And while retired German star Steffi Graf posted a note on

today.

"To beat someone like her is always great. I wish I got more credit than her being ranked number 14th (actually ninth) this week or whatever it is."

Davenport will meet sixth-seeded Anna Kournikova next. The Russian teenager bounced unseeded Ai Sugiyama of Japan 6-4, 6-2 in their first career battle to complete quarter-final play.

World number one Martina Hingis and third-seeded Mary Pierce of France square off in the other semis.

The victory put the Russian into her fifth career semifinal and gave her a chance to improve on her 2-4 mark against Davenport.

# Davenport, Pierce in semis



SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Mar 4: Lindsay Davenport dismissed poor-serving Monica Seles 6-4, 6-4 Friday to reach the semifinals of the 535,000 dollars State Farm Women's Tennis Classic, reports Reuters.

"I'm really thankful it went two sets," said Davenport, the world's second-ranked player and the second seed this week.

"You always put Steffi Graf and Monica into different levels than other players because of their history. Coming into this match, I knew it was going to be tough. I didn't say, 'I'm going to be playing in the semis

Pierce beat French compatriot Nathalie Dechy 6-3, 6-2 to earn a spot against her doubles partner, Hingis.

"It's going to be just like another match," said Pierce who has a 5-8 career record against the top seed. They're all the same and every match is just as important for me.

"Martina and I have a lot of fun playing doubles, but tomorrow we're going to play singles and that's just a totally different mind frame."

"I have to play my game, and be aggressive. If not you give her the chance and she's going to take it from you. Any little chance you get from her, you have to take. If you don't..."

Seles returned to play last week and captured the title in Oklahoma City following a five-month layoff with fractured bone in her right foot.

After victories over Croat Silvija Talajda and eighth-seeded Barbara Schett of Austria, the former world number one had her hopes dashed by inconsistent deliveries.

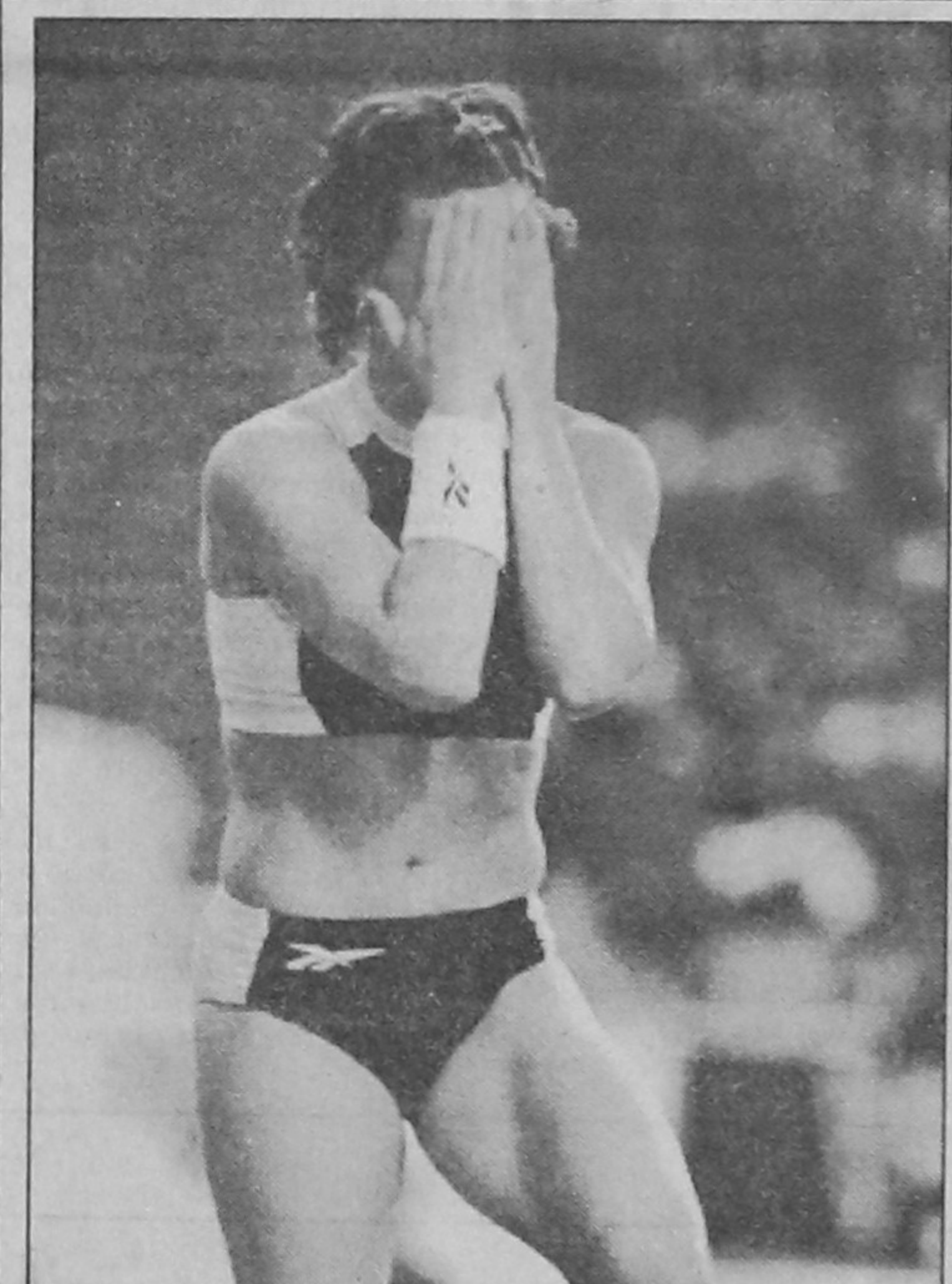
"My serve let me down. I struggled with it today, said Seles, a nine-time Grand Slam champion unseeded in a tournament for the first time since 1989. "I broke Lindsay a couple of times but I lost my serve a couple of times. Against her, you can't let that happen and still win a match."

"I've had trouble finding my timing the whole week," she added. "Against a good returner like her you get punished and I surely got punished. Thank God I was able to return well today, otherwise the score would have been pretty lopsided."

Davenport was pleased to gain the semifinals following a month's layoff to heal a hamstring after winning the Australian Open in January. But she struggled with her toss.

"I'm lucky to come through," she said after improving to 5-2 lifetime against Seles. "I don't think I was serving well, I've been struggling with that a little bit, but I served well when I needed to. I can't believe it. To come back from 4-1 against Monica Seles is pretty hard to do."

Armed with a new red racket and three-week-old laser eye surgery, Pierce powered past Dechy, a surprise runner-up to Seles in Oklahoma City last week.



Stacy Dragila hides her face for joy after breaking her own pole vault world mark in the USA Track and Field meeting at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta on March 3. —AFP photo

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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## CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I BET A LOT OF BALLOON

MANUFACTURERS PREFER POP MUSIC

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals E