

Hughes now Everton's

LIVERPOOL, England, March 14: Wales manager Mark Hughes on Tuesday launched another chapter in his playing career joining Everton's English Premier League collection of 'golden oldies', reports AFP.

The 36-year-old Wales manager and Southampton striker was unveiled at the Merseyside club's training ground Tuesday - and his arrival will increase the average age of a squad which already boasts several veterans.

Dave Watson is 38 and Richard Gough is 37 while John Collins is 32.

There is no fee involved and Hughes, who has signed a 14-month contract taking him through until the end of next season, is expected to make his debut against Coventry at Highfield Road on Wednesday.

Everton manager Walter Smith decided to move for the former Manchester United and Chelsea star because of an injury crisis surrounding his strikers.

Both Kevin Campbell and Francis Jeffers are sidelined at the moment, leaving Smith short of numbers up front.

The Everton manager believes Hughes' experience could prove to be a crucial factor in the remaining weeks of the season.

Hughes joins a number of senior citizens at Goodison, but Smith's tactic of employing senior professionals is paying dividends with Everton in a healthy position in the league.

Hughes is in his 20th year as a pro, having joined Manchester United as an apprentice.

He left Old Trafford in 1995, joining Chelsea for 1.5 million pounds before moving three years later to Southampton.

Chilavert feeling okay

BUENOS AIRES, March 14: Paraguayan international Jose Luis Chilavert was reported to be in good spirits Monday after being slightly wounded by a firecracker thrown onto the pitch during Sunday's Argentine league game between his team Velez Sarsfield and rivals Lanus, reports AFP.

The 34-year-old Chilavert, a bulky man with a boxer's build, lost consciousness for several moments after the firecracker exploded at his feet just 35 seconds into the game.

The incident was greeted with uproar in the Argentine press Monday particularly as it is the ninth attack on Chilavert, noted for his controversial remarks, since 1994.

Chilavert, victim of an almost identical incident less than one year ago, managed to leave the pitch with his teammates.

The game was immediately abandoned and the Argentine Football Association said they would decide this week whether to order a replay or award the points to Velez.

Vialli for two teams

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands, March 14: Chelsea's Italian coach Gianluca Vialli said Monday that a club looking to win trophies on several fronts needs two teams these days to cope with the ever-growing fixture list, reports AFP.

"We need two complete teams, it's sometimes difficult to recuperate," said Vialli ahead of Tuesday's European Champions League tie against Feyenoord.

But the former Juventus star maintained that he was not in any way criticising the current squad as the Blues look to keep going for European glory as well as success in the English Premiership and the FA Cup.

Vialli said the Champions League was not necessarily Chelsea's prime objective as they chase silverware on three fronts.

"We are on course in three competitions. In the league we're close to second place," he said.

But Vialli admitted that the financial lure, as well as the kudos of the Champions League, could not be forgotten.

Feyenoord and Chelsea are joint top of their group and both are chasing a place in the last eight which would be worth some 2.4 million dollars.

Asked about his side's interest in signing PSV Eindhoven striker Ruud Van Nistelrooy, Vialli was non-committal.

"We're looking for very good players, but we can't afford everything," he said.

Earlier, Chelsea officials revealed they were set to submit a 52-page report to UEFA to defend the club against a disciplinary charge following trouble during last month's match in Marseille.

Chelsea will cite evidence from their own fans, Football Association observers, British police officers and their own travel firm to defend their reputation and will also attempt to ensure that the French club are themselves held accountable.

About 1,500 Chelsea fans are expected in Rotterdam for the clash with Feyenoord.

Dutch police are viewing Wednesday's match as a test for their preparations for this summer's European Championships with the final at Feyenoord's De Kuip Stadium.

Spain, ROK will go to Sydney

OSAKA, Japan, Mar 14: Spain and South Korea scored impressive wins on Tuesday to qualify for the Olympic men's field hockey, while Malaysia were one win away from making the trip to Sydney in September, reports AFP.

Britain, Olympic champions in 1988, however, suffered an embarrassing 5-2 reverse against Poland, for whom Piotr Mikula scored all five goals.

The British also had to endure a missed penalty stroke by their captain Jon Wyatt and can now only hope of going through the torturous play-off route to keep their Olympic dream alive.

"It hurts, hurts badly," Britain's Australian coach Barry Dancer said. "But we must put aside this defeat because we still have a chance of going to the Olympics."

Britain must not only defeat Belgium on Wednesday but also hope the other results go in their favour to take part in the play-offs for the fifth and sixth spots.

Spain, silver-medalists at the Atlanta Games in 1996, scored five goals in the last 20 minutes to pull off a remarkable 6-3 victory over Argentina.

South Korea, who finished fifth at Atlanta, brushed aside hosts Japan 5-1 to ensure they too finish among the top four in the 12-nation qualifying tournament here.

With three-time champions Pakistan also certain to qualify, Malaysia and Poland nudged ahead in the scramble for the remaining three places.

The Malaysians defeated Switzerland 4-2 to move to seven points in Group B and ensure a place in the play-offs.

Poland, considered no-hopers at the start of the tournament, zoomed to second place in Group A with six points and a game in hand against New Zealand.

The doughty Argentinians appeared to have wrapped up the match against Spain when they led 3-1 midway through the second half -- but the pressure got to them in the end.

In a brilliant Spanish fight-back that left the Argentine defence stunned, Pol Amat and Eduard Tubau scored twice each and Xavier Arnaiz netted one a few seconds from the end.

The Koreans had an easier outing against Japan, recording their fourth successive win to head Group A with 12 points.

Japan, coached by former South Korean international Seung Jin Yoo, matched their speedier rivals for the first 30 minutes before fading out.

Japan, who last played in the Olympics 32 years ago at

Mexico, have six points, and even though not certain of a place in the top four, the hosts are well-placed to take part in the play-offs.

South Korean manager Kim Sang-Ryul said he expected Japan too to make the trip to Sydney.

"They have played very well and deserve to finish among the top six in this tournament," Kim said. "It will be good to have more Asian teams at the Olympics."

The Malaysians led 1-0 at half-time against Switzerland through a 20th minute goal by Keenan Raj.

Kuhan Shanmuganathan struck a penalty corner after resumption, and skipper Mirnawan Nawawi increased the margin with a solo run down the centre in the 55th minute.

Swiss captain Thierry Grandchamp scored two consolation goals for his team as Suhaimi Ibrahim sealed the match in Malaysia's favour with the fourth goal in the 65th minute.

Six qualifiers will join the six direct entrants -- holders Holland, hosts Australia and the continental champions India, Germany, Canada and South Africa -- at the Olympics in September.

STANDINGS

League standings after Tuesday's matches in the Olympic field hockey qualifying tournament (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Table with 10 columns: Group, Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA, Pts. Group A: S Korea (4, 4, 0, 0, 5, 4, 12), Poland (4, 2, 0, 2, 9, 9, 6), Japan (4, 2, 0, 2, 7, 9, 6), NZealand (3, 1, 1, 1, 7, 8, 4), Britain (4, 1, 1, 2, 9, 13, 4), Belgium (3, 0, 0, 3, 6, 10, 0). Group B: Spain (4, 3, 1, 0, 20, 8, 10), Pakistan (3, 2, 1, 0, 17, 7, 7), Malaysia (4, 2, 1, 1, 16, 14, 7), Argentina (4, 1, 1, 2, 14, 13, 4), Switzerland (4, 1, 0, 3, 8, 15, 3), Belarus (3, 0, 0, 3, 1, 19, 0).



Mary Pierce of France playing against Elena Likhovtseva of Russia in the fourth round of the Masters Series on March 13.

Euro 2000 Hooligans to demonstrate!

BERLIN, March 14: German hooligans are planning to organise a mass protest through the streets of Berlin on March 25 in protest at their exclusion from Euro 2000 matches, police sources revealed here Monday, reports AFP.

At least 800 demonstrators are expected to join in the protest against the German government's recent decision to stamp the passports and restrict the travel of known troublemakers.

The measure is aimed at restricting access of known hooligans to Euro 2000 matches being co-hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands between June 10 and July 2.

But German hooligans believe this is an infringement of their rights as football fans.

Belgian and Dutch ministers have already informed their European counterparts of their intention to tighten up the borders during Euro 2000 in an attempt to stop hooliganism.

A new law is already in place in Holland allowing the authorities to arrest and hold anyone causing trouble up to 12 hours before a game.

London's Evening Standard also reported Monday that Lewis would keep his crown, citing a WBA source, Eliades said he expected the WBA to announce its decision Monday.

Meanwhile, a US district court judge is expected to hold a hearing later this month to decide if the IBF must withdraw its sanctioning of the Lewis-Grant bout.

David Tua, a 27-year-old New Zealander, sued the IBF in January. He said the IBF shouldn't sanction the Lewis-Grant bout because he deserves to fight Lewis first. Tua is the IBF's top contender.

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"The NSW government got me out of Sydney but it was a blessing in disguise because I've found paradise at Queensland's Couran Cove," Christie said on SBS Television here Monday night.

"I have spent eight years training in Sydney but if the government hadn't kicked me out I would never have known about Couran Cove which is a much better facility."

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Christie is now semi-retired and is concentrating on coaching a squad of seven British athletes.

Christie, who won the 100 metres final at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, remains defiant about his alleged use of the steroid nandrolone and claims he will be proved innocent in time.

Kenya Amateur Athletic Association (KAAA) secretary David Okeyo had told reporters at the weekend that five-time world champion, Paul Tergat, had been granted automatic qualification to run in the World Championships in Vilamoura, Portugal on March 18-19.

But said Okeyo on Monday: "I want to put the record straight. The KAAA will propose to the IAAF cross country and road running committee that former champions are given wild cards."

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World No 1 Martina Hingis makes a backhand return against Barbara Schett of Austria during their Masters Series match on Monday.

Lindsay, Serena in qtrs

INDIAN WELLS, California, Mar 14: Second seed Lindsay Davenport posted another lopsided victory on Monday to storm into the quarterfinals of the Tennis Masters Series at Indian Wells, but she knows her luck could easily change, reports Reuters.

Eliades said he has been told by the World Boxing Association that Lewis will be allowed to hold that crown if he meets mandatory WBA challenger Johnny Ruiz as soon as possible after Lewis' April 29 fight against Michael Grant in New York.

The WBA has threatened to strip Lewis of the title because he committed to fight Grant before Ruiz.

Eliades has booked London's Earl's Court for the Ruiz fight July 15.

"We've been informed that the WBA commission has voted 5-2 in favor of keeping the title intact by sanctioning our Grant fight along with the WBC (World Boxing Council) and the IBF (International Boxing Federation). It all looks promising," Eliades told The Daily Mail on Monday.

London's Evening Standard also reported Monday that Lewis would keep his crown, citing a WBA source, Eliades said he expected the WBA to announce its decision Monday.

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ive 7-3 career edge over Davenport. "She's been a difficult opponent for me my whole career," admitted Davenport. "She gets a lot of balls back, mixes it up. It's a good challenge."

Defending champion Serena Williams, Martina Hingis, fifth seed Mary Pierce and seventh seed Monica Seles also claimed quarterfinal berths.

Third seed Williams scored her first straight sets victory in three matches at Indian Wells this year, a 6-4, 6-4 triumph over 33rd-ranked Belgian Kim Clijsters, whom she beat on the way to last year's US Open title.

She rallied impressively from 1-4 down in the second set, taking five consecutive games, but what Williams wanted to talk about was a career-fastest 121 mph (195 kph) ace that ended the eighth game of the first set.

"That was so exciting, I'm really getting up there," Williams said. "It was unbelievable."

"I'm going to start answering my phone, I21."

The victory set up a quarterfinal clash between Williams and Pierce, who scored a 6-3, 5-

7, 7-5 win over 16th seeded Elena Likhovtseva of Russia.

The other quarterfinals pit Hingis against Seles, while American Chanda Rubin faces Russian Elena Dementieva, ensuring that one unseeded player will reach the final four.

Top seed Hingis had an easier than expected time against 10th seed Barbara Schett, defeating the big-hitting Austrian 6-1, 6-1.

"I almost played perfect," beamed Hingis. "I didn't miss, I mixed up the game. Oh, my God, it almost scared me that I was playing so well."

Seles, who won two weeks ago at Oklahoma City after six months of nursing a right foot stress fracture, had to work hard to earn her shot at world number one Hingis, prevailing 3-6, 6-2, 6-3 over 26th-ranked Sabine Appelmans of Belgium.

"The last two years I haven't been able to beat the top four or five in the world," said Seles, who trails Hingis 8-2 in career meetings. "Everyone else I'm beating."

"Hopefully, I can just stay healthy and stay on this track."

World Short-Course C'ships start tomorrow

Top guns aiming higher

ATHENS, Mar 14: Penny Heyns, Jenny Thompson and Lenny Krayzelburg pursue record-breaking trails this week at the World Short-Course Swimming Championships, the last global swimming challenge before the Olympics, reports Reuters.

The North American-based trio, who have set 21 world records between them in the past 12 months, lead a record entry of more than 540 swimmers from an expected 76 nations at the four-day championship beginning on Thursday.

Swedish sprinters Therese Alshammar and Anna-Karin Kammerling, who broke world records at last December's European short-course championships in Lisbon, and the likes of Britons Mark Foster and James Hickman should ensure Europeans have a big say too.

South African double Olympic champion Heyns, based with her longstanding coach Jan Bidman at Canada's Calgary University, has broken 11 breaststroke world marks in the last year, four at the Pan Pacific championships in Sydney, where Krayzelburg set three backstroke records and Thompson broke the 100 metres butterfly mark.

Thompson was outstanding at the last world short-course championships in Hong Kong last April, taking the 100 metres individual medley world mark below one minute and

winning the 100 metres freestyle and 50 and 100 metres butterfly titles.

Ukrainian-born Krayzelburg, double world long-course champion, did not race in Hong Kong but has since demonstrated formidable form in the 25-metre short-course pool, breaking the 100 and 200 backstroke world marks in Berlin last month.

Fellow American Thompson, who preceded her Hong Kong treble with two golds at the 1997 world short-course championships in Gothenburg, has also shown an undiminished turn of speed, posting 50 and 100 butterfly short-course marks in the recently concluded World Cup series.

Heyns settled for three silver medals behind Masami Tanaka in Hong Kong, where the Japanese swimmer set a 200 breaststroke world mark. Heyns was clearly building towards bigger things later in the year -- world record sprees in Los Angeles in July, Sydney in August and South Africa in September.

Alshammar pulled off a stunning double at the European short-course meeting last December, breaking the women's 50 and 100 metres freestyle world records set by China's Le Jingyi back in 1993.

She promises more great things in Athens. "If everything goes as planned I'll break a world record in Athens," Alshammar said at World Cup meeting in Malmo last month.

Sweden are further boosted

by Kammerling, who lowered the 50 butterfly world mark last December, and Lars Frølander, who will defend the men's 100 freestyle and 100 butterfly titles he won in Hong Kong and threaten Foster's 50 metres butterfly crown.

These championships, however, are not the main goal for most this year and indeed, many of the world's top swimmers are far away.

Greece may be the spiritual home of the Olympics and Athens will host the Games again in 2004 but, for now, all Olympic paths lead to Sydney just six months hence.

Australian world record holders Ian Thorpe, Grant Hackett, Michael Klim and Susan O'Neill preferred to stay at home to prepare for the national Olympic trials in May and the Olympic hosts have settled for a second-string squad in Athens. Thorpe's preparations have already included a trip to Europe but that was in February when the 17-year-old favourite for a hoard of Olympic gold competed in three World Cup meetings, lowering his own 200 metres freestyle short-course world record in the process.

Thorpe and distance freestyler Hackett were among the record breakers when eight world marks fell in Hong Kong, where the Australians won nine of the 20 men's titles. None of their individual Hong Kong champions are defending their crowns.

History for Hicham

INDIAN WELLS, California, Mar 14: Andre Agassi fizzled again in an inconspicuous start to the ATP Tour's new vaunted Tennis Masters Series as he fell on Monday to Moroccan Hicham Arazi 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in the first round, reports Reuters.

Arazi took advantage of Agassi's lethargic and sloppy play in handling the world number one his second early-round defeat in a row.

Agassi began the year in stirring fashion by winning his sixth Grand Slam title at the Australian Open and leading the United States to a Davis Cup victory in Africa.

An ATP spokesman said Agassi told him, "I'm incredibly frustrated right now. That was a pitiful performance."

Hard-serving Briton Greg Rusedski and rock-solid Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov cruised to easy first-round victories.

Defending champion Mark Philippoussis rode his booming serve to a 6-3, 6-4 victory over American Chris Woodruff in the featured night match.

"I have a lot of confidence now, but for me it's not good to have too much confidence. It's better to be the opposite, to get in and think that I'm a bad player, then on the court I can do some good stuff."

"If I get too much confidence it's not good."

"It was the best win of my career," Arazi said. "It was great to beat him after what happened in Australia where he played so great and there was nothing I could do. Today, he double faulted a lot and made a lot of unforced errors. I took my chances."

Agassi did not attend the post-match interview, drawing an automatic 1,000 dollars.

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During the match the 12-seeded Australian recorded a 142-mph (228.5 kph) ace and had another 145 mph (233 kph) missile that appeared good called out.

"That serve was in but they took it away from me," Philippoussis complained. "During the day that might have been a 152 mph (245 kph) serve."

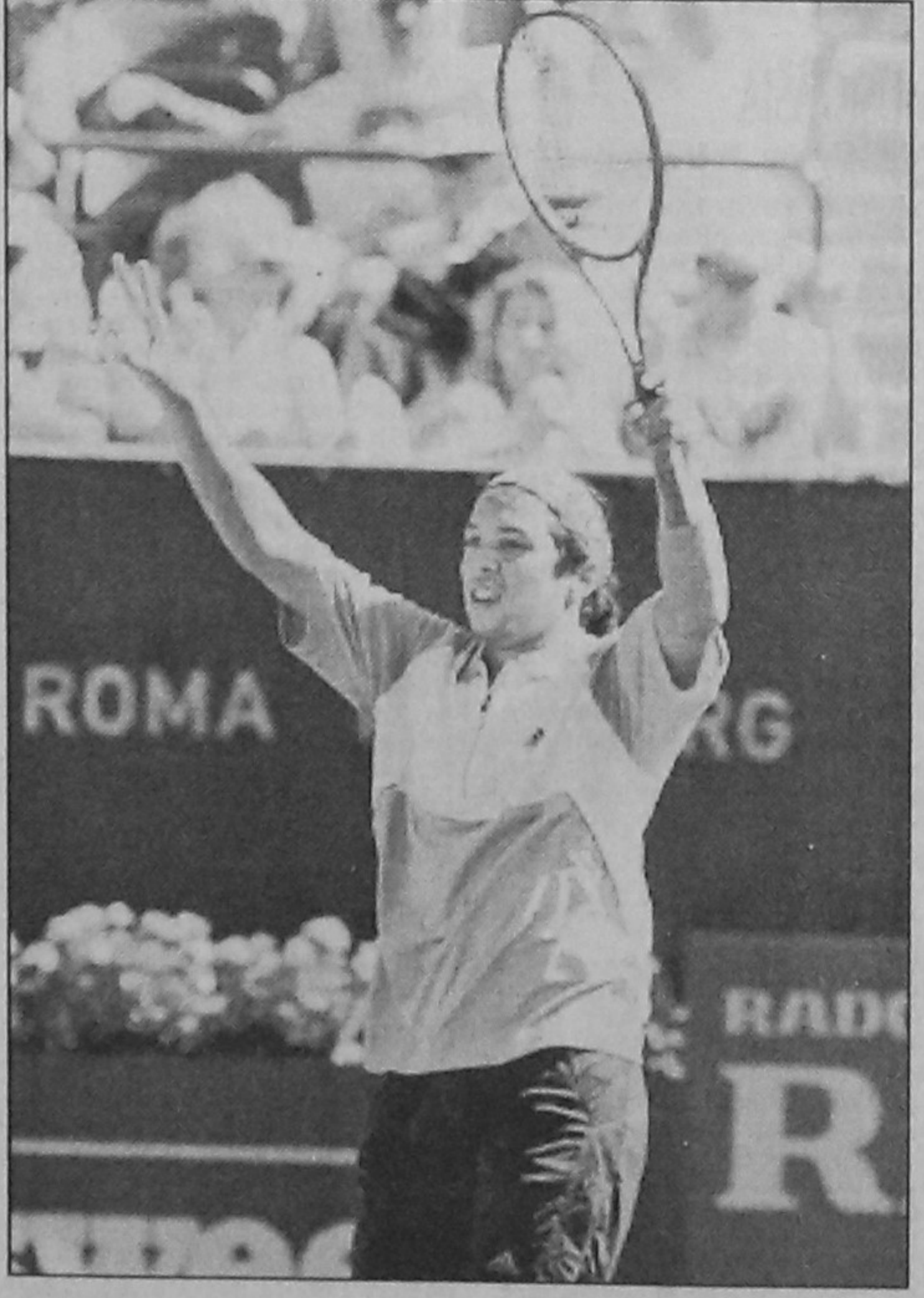
Rusedski set the record here two years ago for the fastest serve ever recorded at 149 mph (240 kph).

Rusedski began his desert sojourn with a 6-2, 6-0 wipeout of young American James Blake.

Rusedski, who has struggled with a foot injury and played sparingly this year, cranked up the volume on his serve and used a precise net attack to subdue his young foe.

"It was a good match," Rusedski said. "I thought he played well the first seven games. I was pleased with the way I played and managed to raise my game. After I won the first set, I had really good control of the match."

Third seeded Kafelnikov overwhelmed American Vince Spadea 6-1, 6-1.



Hicham Arazi of Morocco raises his hands after beating American Andre Agassi in the first round of the Masters Series in Indian Wells on March 13.

NSW did Christie a help?

SYDNEY, Mar 14: British former Olympic gold medalist Linford Christie believes being refused training facilities in Sydney has been a blessing in disguise, reports AFP.

Christie faces a two-year suspension after a positive test for steroids and was banned by the New South Wales Government last month from using its training facilities in Sydney.

"The NSW government got me out of Sydney but it was a blessing in disguise because I've found paradise at Queensland's Couran Cove," Christie said on SBS Television here Monday night.

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KAAA's intention

NAIROBI, Mar 14: Kenya athletes officials said Monday they will ask the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) grant cross country title holders automatic qualification to the next championships, reports AFP.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 34 Go like 53 Evenings, 20 Charged bit 1 Pigs' Earhart Abbr. 23 Weir home 35 Bathroom 24 One million 4 Rudi- fixtures 1 Without 25 Lustrous black 8 Singer Parseg- hian 3 Tall tale 26 Broker's advice 12 "Eureka!" 37 Emmet 4 Reach 27 Vandal 13 Snare 38 One's 5 Asinine remarks? 28 Wapiti 14 Apple best outfit 6 Wily sort 29 Absolutely 15 Postal 46 Lauren 7 Austere 31 Holder for babies 16 Skater 47 Downsize 8 Mashed-potato 32 Catcher's prop 17 Erstwhile 48 Som- topping 34 Monk's address 18 They enjoy their cars 49 Shak., 10 Mideast- ern bigwig 35 Catch some z's 21 Part of H.R.H. 52 Duranle's pride 11 Capone viper 36 Venomous 22 Nursery item 19 Sailing vessel 37 Lead-in to "calm" or "bright" 38 Wields a maul 23 City in France 26 Prescription 27 Attention getter 40 Al Hirschfeld's daughter 30 From the top 31 Piece of word-play 32 Army mascot 33 Wrestling surf ace

Cryptogram puzzle grid with numbers 1-31 and letters H, L, P, W, G, M, O, W, G, Z, F, F, A, Z, V, F, S, Y, W, Z, L, V, J, W, O, W, X, W, J, H, M, Z, F, M, S, V, Z, L, A, X, Z, J, X, W, J, L, Z, O, W, V, L, S, Y, P. Below the grid is the text 'CRYPTOQUIP' and 'Yesterday's answer'.

Yesterday's answer: The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters