

Anti-corruption confce down under

MELBOURNE, July 17: The Australian Cricket Board (ACB), accused in the past of not taking a leading role in stamping out corruption in the game, will host an anti-corruption conference in Melbourne on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The meeting, involving leading officials, will hear from lawyers and gambling experts, and include a round-table discussion on the regulation of sports gambling and how to educate players.

Former Australian test off-spinner Tim May, who is the president of the Australian Cricketers' Association, will speak about the pressures of playing professional sport and the consequences of being a whistle-blower.

May and team mates Shane Warne and Mark Waugh brought corruption in test cricket into the spotlight in 1994 by accusing Pakistani batsman Salim Malik of offering them matchfixing money.

"If we can find common ground to fight the problem, then that will benefit all sports, not just cricket," ACB chief executive Malcolm Speed said.

The Pakistan Cricket Board imposed a life ban on Malik in May this year after the release of a long-awaited judicial report into allegations of corruption in the game.

In 1998, the ACB admitted it had secretly fined Mark Waugh and Warne in 1995 for giving what it called routine pitch and weather details to bookmakers.

Jonty's improper use of a word!
LONDON, July 17 (Internet report): Jonty Rhodes, best friend of sacked Proteas captain Hansie Cronje, is frustrated because "the South Africans always have to be the good guys".

His feeling of being "gatvol" has, however, landed him in trouble with the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA) after he used the word "poephol" in a radio interview.

Rhodes, however, received sympathy from an unexpected quarter. The conservative The Sunday Telegraph, one of the biggest British Sunday newspapers, hinted that Rhodes' use of the word "poephol" was justified.

In an interview in Colombo, Rhodes said the Pakistan fast bowler Waqar Younis, who was recently fined for ball tampering, behaved like a proper "poephol" (as it appeared in the newspaper). He used the word more than once in the interview.

The Sunday Telegraph's translation of the word "poephol" will probably be offensive to "delicate readers", but the fact is that the word, in Afrikaans really means idiotic or stupid. According to the Telegraph, it is the kind word that mothers use to admonish their children.

"He could just as well have called Younis a clown," according to the newspaper, there is therefore no difference between a "p...l" and a clown. Nowhere in the report is the English word "arsehole" — the proper translation — used.

And yet Rhodes has been strongly criticised by the UCBSA because he used the word in a radio interview. According to the newspaper, after "Hansiegate" there is even more pressure on the South African cricketers to win at all costs and otherwise keep quiet.

The newspaper reports widely about the fact that Rhodes is a Christian and how he misses Cronje who, over the last decade, became his best friend and that they were on about 30 overseas tours together. Rhodes feels as if something has been amputated from him.

Leander, Mahesh together again?
BANGALORE, July 17: India's tennis authorities are trying to bring together the estranged top doubles pairing of Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi for the World's Doubles Tournament in Bangalore in December.

"We have made an offer to both of them to play in the tournament. Bhupathi has accepted the offer and we are awaiting a reply from Paes," Sunder Raju, secretary of the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association told AFP.

"They have been allotted a wild card entry. They are India's best and we want them to play," Raju said.

The five-day tournament begins December 11. The pair, who were Wimbledon and French Open doubles champions in 1999, split in May following a dispute over Bhupathi's coach, Enrico Piperno.

Ecuador banish Britain

LONDON, July 17: Great Britain were relegated from the elite 16-Nation World Group when they went down 3-2 to unfancied Ecuador on Court One at Wimbledon, reports AFP.

It was further confirmation of the parlous state of the British game and salt was rubbed into the wound when victory was sealed for the South Americans by Giovanni Lapentti, ranked 959th in the world.

In the 19th century British anthropologist Charles Darwin formulated his theory of evolution after visiting Ecuador's Galapagos Islands -- but on this evidence it is British tennis that is threatened with extinction and the Ecuadorian species that is in the ascendancy.

Trailing 2-1 overnight, Britain had to win both of Sunday's reverse singles to avoid relegation.

British number one Tim Henman kept his side of the bargain in style with a straight-sets win, beating world number 11 Nicolas Pietrangeli 6-1, 6-4, 6-4.

But Lapentti's younger brother Giovanni, aged just 17, then came back from two sets down to defeat Arvind Parmar in the deciding rubber to seal a 3-2 win.

The match ended in controversy with a disputed line call in the final game that had some of the crowd booing as Giovanni gave his post-match interview.

Serving for the match at 5-3 up and 30-15, Lapentti's forehand was called out by the line judge but then overruled by chair umpire Jorge Dias.

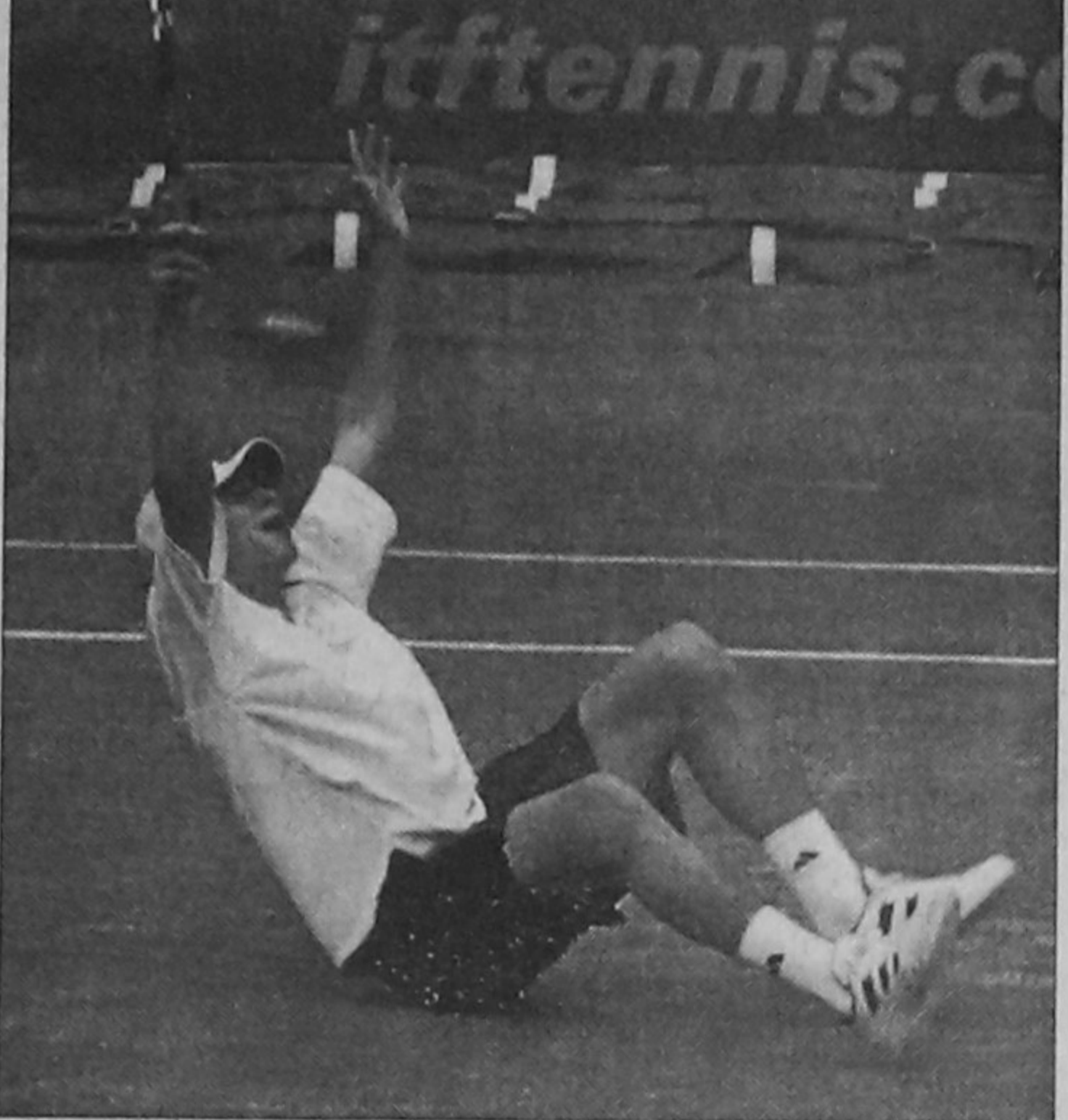
Parmar, making his debut in the competition, was furious, holding his finger and thumb several inches apart to indicate how far he thought the ball was out.

A let was eventually played.

but in reality it made no difference to the result of the match which had always favoured Ecuador since Greg Rusedski lost the opening singles on Friday and was then ruled out of the rest of the tie through injury.

Giovanni Lapentti said: "When I was two sets down I was thinking I was still playing better than Arvind. I hung in there and was soon inspired and I started playing unbelievable tennis."

"This is the best day of my life and I dedicate this victory to my country."



Giovanni Lapentti of Ecuador celebrates after beating Briton Arvind Parmar in the final Davis Cup singles match in London on July 16.

— AFP photo

Henman calls for changes

LONDON, July 17: Tim Henman on Monday called for a complete overhaul of British tennis following the humiliating Davis Cup defeat to Ecuador at the weekend, reports AFP.

With Greg Rusedski suffering a potential career-threatening injury and desperately out of sorts, Britain were effectively a one-man team beaten by one-favourite opponents, brothers Nicolas and Giovanni Lapentti scoring all of Ecuador's points in their country's first Davis Cup tie ever on grass.

Henman acknowledged Britain need to produce more strength in depth if they are to fulfil ambitions to do more than simply get back into the 16-nation world group next year.

Britain has produced several promising players who have flourished in the junior ranks but failed to make the senior grade.

The British number one added his voice to those calling for change within the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), giving his backing to Frenchman Patrice Hagelauer -- the new performance director who led France to Davis Cup glory.

"That transition period is very important, but it's not happening," said Henman.

"I think with Patrice's experience we have someone for the first time who really knows what he is doing -- and I'd be the first to support him."

"If we look at the whole situation in British tennis something has to change at the top. I have total and utter belief in Patrice's experience and ability. He should be given carte blanche to do what he wants."

"If changes are going to be made they are not going to happen overnight -- but things must change."

Henman did admit, however, that players must share some of the blame.

He added: "In my last year in the juniors I played 225 matches, and that's where you learn a lot about yourself."

"You have to go out there and make things happen for yourself. It has to come from within. We can talk about the structure and the coaching and all these areas -- but you have to look at the players."

"We have plenty of players who are under-achieving. The players have to have a look at themselves."

The LTA's director of tennis Richard Lewis is under the most pressure to quit but initially sidestepped questions about resigning.

"It's too soon to comment on that on the evening of an emotional Davis Cup defeat," said Lewis, who bears responsibility for helping produce world class British players along with Hagelauer.

"Nobody is more disappointed and frustrated than me."

Great Britain captain Roger Taylor insisted his team can bounce straight back after dropping into Euro/African Zone Group One with prospective opponents there including the Ivory Coast, Slovenia or Belarus.

"Euro/African Zone matches are tough, but it's possible to get back in this division again. We are beaten but not bowed," said Taylor.

US TRIAL NOTES

SACRAMENTO, July 17 (AFP): Marla Runyan already had a Paralympic title to her name, now she'll get her shot at the Olympics after qualifying in the 1,500m at the US Olympic Trials.

Runyan, who has been left legally blind by the degenerative retina condition Starburst's Disease, said she considered her blindness -- she has only limited peripheral vision -- a coincidence, more than a handicap.

"I never looked on it as a barrier," said Runyan, who has been classified as blind since the age of nine. "My vision is just a circumstance."

"I never said I want to be the first legally blind person on the Olympic team. I just said I want to become an Olympian, me, Marla."

She cleared 6.75m on her third attempt to lie fourth at the halfway point.

She briefly displaced halfway leader Dawn Burrell with a 6.88 in the fourth round, but Burrell regained the lead with a leap of 6.96m.

With the pressure to make the Olympic team off, Jones uncorked a leap of 7.02 on her fifth attempt, her first 7-meter jump in 13 months. She fouled on her sixth, running through the pit.

Jones said she knew the performance wouldn't silence all the critics who say she should improve on her long jump technique, but it was enough for her.

"When you jump 7 meters, you know you're going the right direction," she said.

Burrell took second with a final jump of 6.97 and Shana Williams was third with 6.87.

The victory kept Jones on enough for her.

"Then I looked over in the stands and saw Trevor and CJ," added Jones, whose coach, Trevor Graham, and husband CJ Hunter were watching attentively. "They were pumped up because they knew if I got a fair jump it would be a long one. As soon as I saw they still believed in me, no problem."

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Euphoria back home

QUITO, July 17: Ecuador was Sunday celebrating a momentous tennis Davis Cup victory over Great Britain that has earned them a place in the elite 16-nation World Group, reports AFP.

The victory, achieved at the bastion of British tennis, Wimbledon, dominated conversation Sunday and earned a rare place in the sun for the tiny country.

Ecuadorians in the capital Quito had to listen to the match on the radio and when 17-year-old Giovanni Lapentti, ranked 959th in the world, sealed the tie by beating Britain's Arvind Parmar 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-3, 6-3 it was all too much for the commentators.

Three radio stations covered the match -- they were CRE, Caravana and Atalaya.

"Excellent work by Giovanni," sobbed one commentator at the finish. Throughout the match he had been shouting "Come on, come on, you can do it."

Ecuador has experienced many difficulties in recent years including a coup d'etat last year and the feelgood factor was much in evidence after the historic win.

Giovanni upstaged his more-heralded brother and teammate, Nicolas, ranked number eight in the world.

In Guayaquil, the home town of the Lapenttis, people only found out by word of mouth -- Ecuador's position in the Andes makes it difficult for the whole country to receive radio transmissions.

Former president of the Ecuadorian Tennis Federation Mario Canesa said: "Thanks to all these boys who have given me so much happiness."

Meanwhile, former Ecuador star Andres Gomez, whose victory in the 1990 French Open was a landmark sporting achievement for his country and the only triumph by a player of that nationality in a Grand Slam, explained that the fact that the victory was at Wimbledon made it all the sweeter.

"The mysticism surrounding Wimbledon makes the heart suddenly thump much harder than in any other place," said Gomez.

(Wimbledon) has a special aura that none of the other Grand Slams venues have. It does not matter if you are Spanish, Argentinian, Asian or African. That is why it is different to the other tournaments."

Giovanni upstaged his more-heralded brother and was praised by another former Ecuadorian Davis Cup player Ricardo Leaza.

"To say that he has reached the level of Andres Gomez is premature," said Leaza. "He still has a long way to go."

Another former Ecuadorian player, Fabricio Valdivieso, said: "He (Giovanni) must be guided appropriately and he has a lot to do to improve his technical and mental time but there are few players of his age, in reality, who could have done what he did today."

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR CHEN

She was Chen Yueling when she competed for China, now the racewalker has US citizenship and a chance to represent her adopted country at the Olympics.

"I'm very happy to make the team," said Chen, who finished second in the 20-kilometer race walk at the US Olympic Trials on Sunday, behind Michelle Rohl.

"I represented China before, and now I can do the same for the USA. I want to do my absolute best for the country."

"Even though I hadn't competed in six years, I think I did a pretty good job," said Chen, known Western-style in her adopted country as Yueling Chen. "My stomach was hurting for the last 12K of the race. I felt the pain and it got worse as we went on. I just told myself to keep going for another lap."

So the big turnout and excited atmosphere at the US Olympic Trials in Sacramento was a welcome surprise.

"This atmosphere has been far better than any other trials I've been in," said four-time Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersey.

"Yesterday I was watching, and they were really into the shot put," she said with a chuckle. "That's what you want."

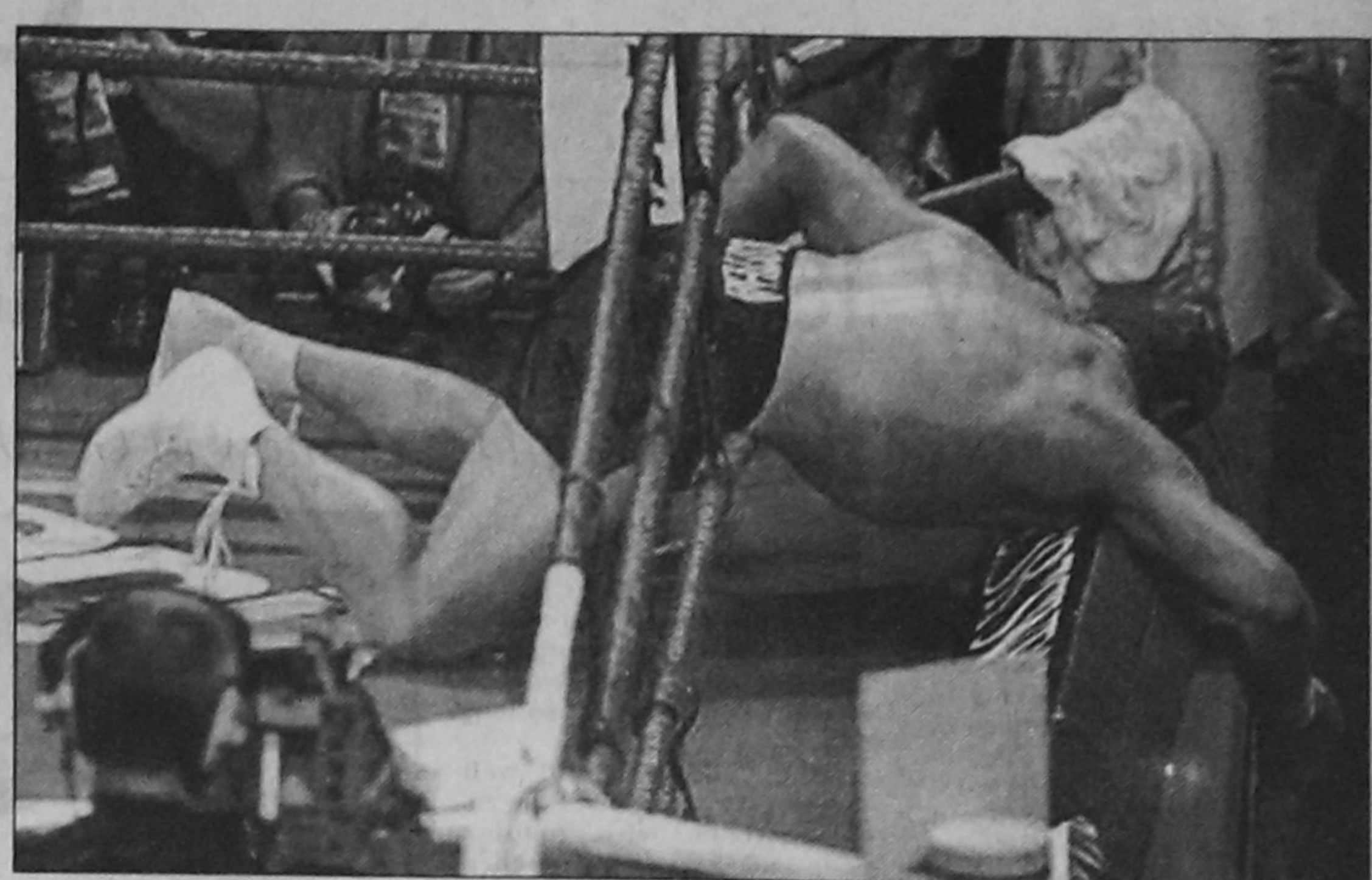
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VICTIM OF LEWIS ONSLAUGHT: Francois Botha is thrown out the ring by Lennox Lewis (not in picture) during their heavyweight title fight in London on July 16.

Greatness, he wants next

LONDON, July 17 (AFP): If beating Evander Holyfield didn't propel Lennox Lewis to greatness, stopping Francois Botha certainly won't.

Lewis may need Tyson, despite holding two pieces of the heavyweight title and showing he may be coming into his own as a fighter at the relatively advanced age of 34.

Don't tell Lewis that, though, even though most of the questions surrounding his fight with Botha were directed at a possible meeting with Tyson.

The glamour has gone off a Tyson fight, Lewis said after stopping Botha in the second round Saturday night before an appreciative hometown crowd. "It's turned into a circus show to me."

Lewis put on an impressive performance in stopping an inept Botha in the second round in a fight that did nothing to damage -- but little to bolster -- his claim that he is the best of the heavyweight generation.

That could take a fight with Tyson, whose long shadow loomed over Lewis' homecoming at the London Arena.

Put up or shut up, Lewis challenged Tyson from the ring. A fight with Tyson would not only legitimize Lewis' insistence he is the true heavyweight champion, but would also give him a 30 million dollars payday that could speed up his talk of retirement.

He got 6 million dollars to fight Botha returning to London six years after he was embarrassed here by a second-round knockout at the hands of Oliver McCall. Lewis showed Tyson-like power in a three-punch combination that left Botha under the ropes before the fight was waved to a close at 2:39 of the second round.

But Botha, who Tyson stopped in the fifth round in January 1999, didn't prove to be much of an opponent. He threw only a few wild punches and spent most of the two rounds trying to stay away from Lewis.

Coming home to beat a fighter who was 1-1-1 in his last three contests may not have proved much outside of England.

"I think it was a good performance," Lewis said. "But I still think there's a lot more the public hasn't seen from Lennox Lewis."

They may see more later this year when Lewis is scheduled to fight David Tua, the Samoan from New Zealand who is built like -- and fights much like -- Tyson.

Lewis faces a mandatory IBF title defense against the top-ranked Tua by November, a fight that could be a perfect warmup for Tyson. That's assuming Tyson doesn't self-destruct by then and has the few more fights he says he needs to get ready for Lewis.

It's also assuming the two competing television networks that have contracts with the respective fighters can come to an agreement. And that's not likely to happen, as Lewis seemed to indicate.

"I gave him his chance a long time ago, and Evander Holyfield has even beaten him twice," Lewis said. "I am the man at the top. I am the undisputed heavyweight champion."

Botha, who has been knocked out by both gives Lewis a good chance against Tyson.

"He has a long reach and is very awkward. If he can keep Mike on the outside he can be victorious," Botha said.

Unlike Tyson, the knock on Lewis is that he has always been too cautious, both in picking his opponents and inside the ring.

He wasn't so much cautious as he was methodical against Botha, although the South African who lives in Las Vegas gave Lewis little to be worried about. According to Compubox stats, Botha landed only nine of 37 punches, and none of them to any effect.

It was the second straight second-round knockout for Lewis, who believes he is just coming into his own as a great heavyweight. He didn't show that in two fights with Evander Holyfield, but proved at least he can dominate lesser fighters in the division.

"You've just seen a glimpse of what I've been seeing the last five years," Lewis trainer Emanuel Steward said.

Js remain on course

SACRAMENTO, California, July 17: Marion Jones shook off doubts -- if not all doubters -- with a gutsy victory in the US Olympic Trials long jump Sunday that kept her dream of five gold medals in Sydney alive, reports AFP.

"I was quite concerned," admitted Jones, who fouled on her first two jumps to put herself in a do-or-die situation in the six-jump competition -- in which the field was cut from 12 to eight at the halfway stage.

"After I jumped the second jump and turned around and saw that red flag, for the blink of an eye I thought: 'One more, if I don't get into it this dream could be over.'"

Then I looked over in the stands and saw Trevor and CJ," added Jones, whose coach, Trevor Graham, and husband CJ Hunter were watching attentively. "They were pumped up because they knew if I got a fair jump it would be a long one. As soon as I saw they still believed in me, no problem."

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Gstaad Open Corretja's

GSTAAD, Switzerland, July 17: Alex Corretja tuned up for this weekend's Davis Cup semi-final on clay against the United States, winning his second title Monday at the 600,000-dollar Gstaad Open, reports AFP.

The Spanish number one overwhelmed Argentine Mariano Paucot 6-1, 6-3 in a match reduced to best-of-three sets after a week of rain threw the alpine tournament well behind schedule, pushing the title contest back a day.

Corretja, who claimed his second trophy of the year after winning the Masters Series event in California in March, was playing his third match in two days as the sun stayed out for the first time in more than a week.

On Sunday, the 26-year-old had to win a quarterfinal over Chile's Marcelo Rios and then defeated Gaston Gaudio of Argentina in the evening to reach the rare Monday final.

"Fortunately I stayed alive," the happy winner said. "I felt great, Mariano also had a great week. I played perfect tennis and served great."

"I've now won it twice here, thank you Gstaad," Corretja said before being presented with the trophy by Roy Emerson, who runs summer clinics here. The Australian's record of 12 Grand Slam singles titles was broken last weekend at Wimbledon by Sampras.

Corretja now faces a dash down south to reach the northern town of Santander, venue for the Davis clash with the U.S., which will be missing big names Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi through injury.

Corretja banked a prize cheque of 81,000 dollars, while Paucot, who had beaten the Spaniard in their only previous meeting at Palermo in 1998, won 47,500.

The Spaniard made it two titles on the 1,000-metre-high clay of Gstaad. Two years ago, he lifted the trophy to deny Boris Becker a chance at a clay title, something the now-retired German never won.

Corretja's win makes it five titles in a row here for Spaniards and nine out of the last 11 trophies.

The top seed wasted no time on a sunny morning in the Alps, racing to a 5-0 lead with two breaks of Puerta, 20.

The Argentine had trouble making his baseline game work, despite playing only one match Sunday and being more rested than his Spanish rival.

The South American, who owns two career titles, won his first game after 22 minutes for 1-5, but it was little consolation as Corretja clinched the set on the first of two chances, a backhand volley winner after 29 minutes.

In the second, eighth seed Puerta found some rhythm, holding to start the set, but was broken for 3-1 as Corretja sensed victory in the sunshine.

The Spaniard kept up the pressure and drove to 5-3 with a forehand winner. Puerta dropped serve a game later to lose.

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Loroupe wins in style

LONDON, July 17: Olympic marathon favourite Tegla Loroupe clocked a world-best time as she claimed a runaway win in Britain's biggest women-only road race in Hyde Park here on Sunday, reports AFP.

The Kenyan easily eclipsed the 12,500-strong field to take first place in the London Light Marathon three-mile race in a time of 15 minutes eight seconds.

OVER THE MOON: Spaniard Alex Corretja exults after beating Argentina's Mariano Paucot, in the Gstaad Open final yesterday.

— AFP photo

Quader makes

From page 13

The Football Players' Welfare Association on Sunday has given BFF a two-day ultimatum, urging it to announce a fresh transfer date immediately.