

Sheltech Div II badminton from Sept 9

Sports Reporter

The Sheltech Second Division badminton league begins at the NSC wooden floor gymnasium from Saturday.

Eight teams - Sheikh Russell, Manicha, Kathalagan Badminton Club, Jagarai, Jubo Sangha, Uttar Kirta Sangha, Shahbagh Badminton Club, Mirpur Badminton Club, Shuttlers Club and Victoria Sporting Club will take part in the league, being organised by the Bangladesh Badminton Federation.

A press conference was held yesterday at the NSC conference room with Bangladesh Badminton Federation (BBF) president Kutubuddin Ahmed in the chair. Acting General Secretary of BBF Mariam Tareq and Dr Toufique M Siraj, the managing director of sponsor Sheltech Limited, were also present at the briefing.

The sponsor will provide Taka one lakh for the meet.

US OPEN NOTEBOOK

NEW YORK, Sept 6 (AP): Fans are filling up at the US Open, ignoring the high price of concession food and beverages. Concession sales were up 20.2 per cent for the first seven days of the tournament with the biggest sellers 7.25 dollars hamburgers - at about 50,000 dollars per day - it followed by pizza-pasta and deli items.

SEE YA LATER

When No. 3 Magnus Norman lost the first match of the day against Nicolas Kiefer on Tuesday, some folks wondered if he would stick around to watch his girlfriend, No. 1 Martina Hingis, play her quarterfinal match at night against Monica Seles.

"I'm going to go home to Monte Carlo as soon as possible and take a few days rest before the Olympics, try to recuperate," he said.

But if Hingis got to the finals?

"First of all," Norman said, "I have to take care of my own career, and second, you know

MAD NAVRATILOVA

Martina Navratilova and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario lost their third-round women's doubles match to Anke Huber and Barbara Schett 6-3, 6-2. Afterwards, Navratilova was asked about being nostalgic as she left the court at Louis Armstrong Stadium.

"She said, 'because I'm planning on being back. No reason' to get nostalgic yet. Just (angry) that I played lousy. Really aggravated."

"I didn't let my body flow today. It really upset me. There were flashes of good stuff, but there were only flashes, unfortunately."

Navratilova and Rick Leach were beaten in mixed doubles on Monday by Anna Kournikova and Max Mirnyi.

French First Division Marseille blank Monaco

MONACO, Sept 5: Ten-man Marseille scored twice in the second half to beat French champions Monaco 2-0 at their Louis II Stadium in the French league on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Marseille, looking defensively much more solid this season, were rocked by the sending off of Zoumana Camara four minutes after the break.

Substitutes Jacques Abardonado and Djamel Belmadi however went on to score in the 77th and 90th minutes to inflict Monaco's second home loss after just six matches this season following a 5-2 thrashing by Nantes.

The April 7 fixture earlier this year between the sides at the Stade Velodrome had been a controversial affair with players exchanging verbal and physical blows.

None such trouble arose this time perhaps because of major changes in the Marseille side during the close season.

Marseille coach Abel Braga said afterwards: "We were after this victory since the start of the championship. It was a special day because we were playing against a great team."

"We won because we went on to the pitch with a winning mentality and even reduced to 10 men we twice hit the woodwork. I'm happy for my players but not euphoric."

Premiership

MU toy with Bradford



LONDON, Sept 6: Sir Alex Ferguson may have changed his line-up but the result was still predictable as Manchester United thrashed Bradford 6-0 at Old Trafford on Tuesday to top the table for the first time this season, reports AFP.

Ronnie Wallwork, Jonathan Greening and Quinton Fortune, who all scored twice, made it into a United side captained for the first time by Teddy Sheringham.

Obviously inspired by wearing the captain's armband, Sheringham in the 11th minute created United's opening goal. He played Andy Cole through on the right with a superb slide-rule pass.

Cole took the ball in his stride before unleashing a shot, which came off the covering Peter Atherton and looped over the stranded Matt Clarke and into the Bradford net.

United were punting now and Nicky Butt, back after a four-match suspension, drilled a shot over from 20 yards out.

Butt tried his luck again with another stinging 20-yard effort, which Clarke could only parry.

It was all United now and Bradford, who deployed Benito Carbone and Dean Windass in attack, could hardly manage to get out of their own half.

United did not have to wait long for the second goal and it came in the 23rd minute courtesy of Quinton Fortune's left boot, although Bradford may feel aggrieved about Gary Neville's challenge on Windass in the build-up.

Neville appeared to barge Windass as he won possession and passed the ball to Sheringham.

Sheringham then fed Beckham on the right, who whipped the ball in from the right. Cole missed with a stooping header and Fortune came steaming in at the back post to give Clarke no chance from 10 yards out.

The strike was Fortune's third in the Premiership and each one has been against Bradford at Old Trafford.

Fortune scored his second of the match on the hour mark to add to the party mood.

Cole found him running down the middle of the pitch and the South African international let fly with a 25-yard shot which zipped past Clarke.

United weren't finished yet and in the 71st minute Sheringham latched on to

Mikael Silvestre's long pass to rifle home goal number four.

Bradford were over-run by Gunnar Solskjaer and David Beckham adding two goals in the 81st and 85th minutes respectively.

At White Hart Lane former

Dinamo Kiev star Sergei Rebrov's double strike inspired Tottenham to come back from 2-0 down to win 3-2.

In an error-strewn match Tottenham full-back Ben Thatcher gifted Everton the lead.

The defender's backpass to keeper Neil Sullivan fell hopelessly short and Francis Jeffers was able to make amends for his earlier miss by rolling the ball under Sullivan and over the line despite Chris Perry's desperate attempt to clear.

Alex Nyarko piled on the misery for Spurs with a second Everton goal driven inside Sullivan's near-post from 20 yards.

But after they claimed in vain for a penalty when Freund appeared to be tripped just inside the area, Spurs pulled a goal back through Rebrov who

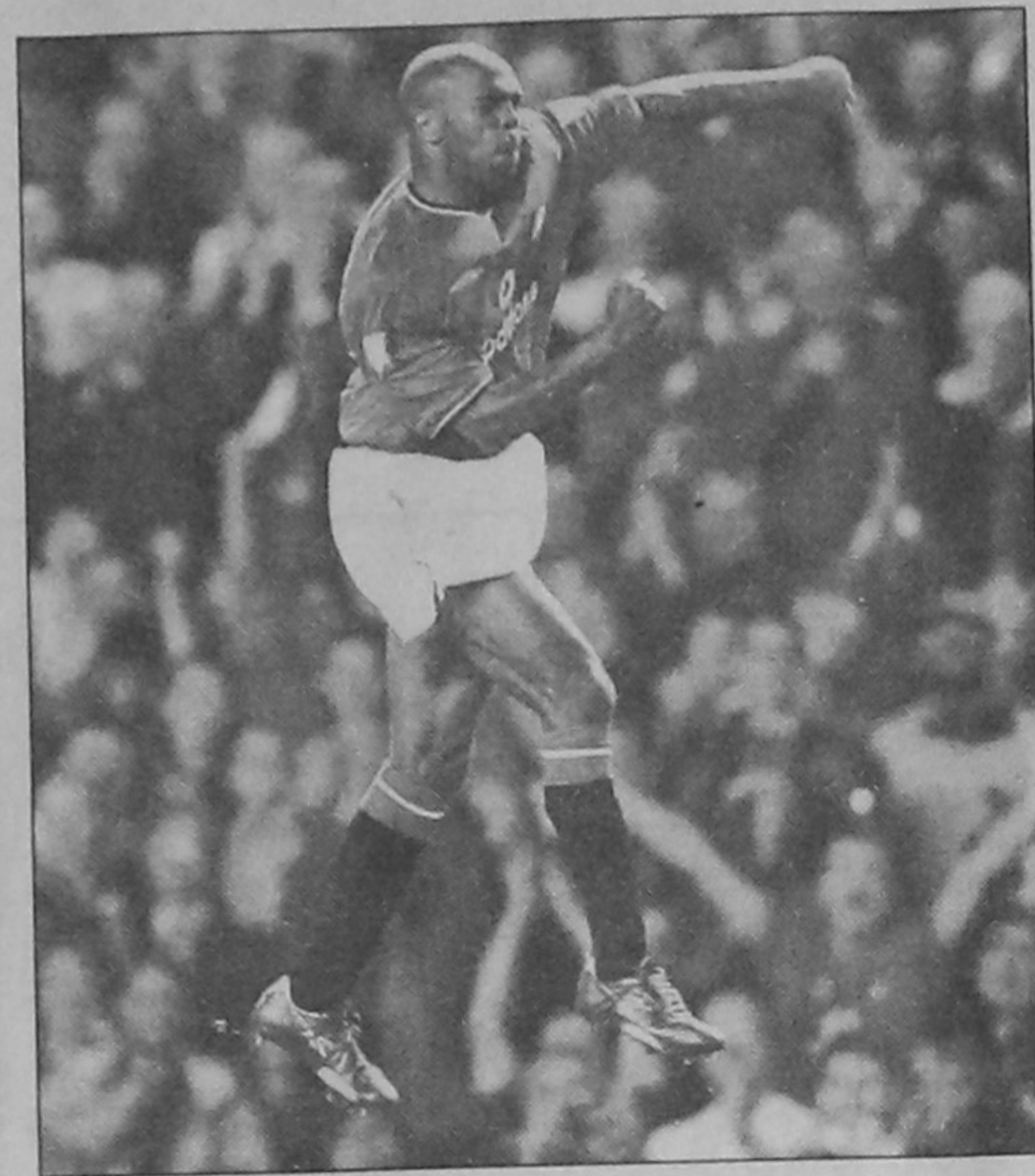
of being completely over-run and Paul Gerrard had to make a flying save from Oyvind Leonhardsen after Steffen Freund had cut the ball back from the byline for the Norwegian to hammer at goal from the edge of the box.

Sunderland debutant Julio Arca could not secure victory for the home side despite marking his first appearance with a goal.

The Argentinean headed his side in front after 25 minutes, but Croatian striker Davor Suker levelled within seven minutes to ensure a share of the spoils for West Ham.

Manchester City heralded their return to the top flight with an amazing victory against one of the Champions League elite.

"City are back" chanted their



Manchester United's Quinton Fortune jumps for joy after scoring his second goal against Bradford City in their Premiership clash at Old Trafford on September 5. —AFP photo

slotted in after Les Ferdinand's shot came back off a post following a Clemence free kick.

Tottenham levelled matters with Rebrov's second goal, this time from the penalty spot in the 61st minute after referee Barry Knight spotted an Everton hand being used to keep out Sol Campbell's header.

And two minutes later Ferdinand beat David Unsworth to a Stephen Clemence cross to flick Spurs in front.

Everton were now in danger

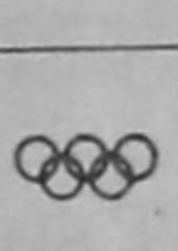
delighted fans, few of whom could have expected a result anything like this after such a shaky start to the season.

Leeds are in Barcelona next week, but City refused to be overawed and turned in a stunning performance.

First half goals from Steve Howey and Gerard Wiekens put City in command, and although Lee Bowyer pulled one back, the Maine Road men battled for their lives to secure their first away win of the season.

Mutiah, who is here to attend the Asian Cricket Founda-

Olympics boycott the Taliban



KABUL, Sept 6 (AFP): Football inspires strong emotions from religious zeal to fanatical violence, but in Afghanistan both extremes merge into one and it's the authorities, not the fans, who are usually responsible.

Athletes representing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as the ruling Taliban militia prefer to be known, have been banned from the Sydney Olympics because of the local authorities' puritanical laws against women.

But the international pressure has had no effect on the Taliban, who bar women from playing or even freely watching sport, interrupt football matches for mass prayer sessions and beat fans who refuse to pray.

The only times women are encouraged to enter Kabul's battle-scarred stadium is during public executions, or when the religious police burn examples of Western "filth" such as videos.

At a recent match between a Kabul club side and a visiting team of Afghans based in neighbouring Pakistan, the religious police appeared in their trademark Japanese pick-ups about 10 minutes before half-time.

They began circling the shell-cratered running track around, the bearded young recruits leaning out of the vehicles with their AK-47s exhorting the all-male crowd to gather on the field for afternoon prayers.

Within minutes the players

had left the field and thousands of skull-capped men were kneeling in lines at one end of the ground, while the Taliban led the prayers over loud speakers mounted on their pick-ups.

At the other end, pandemonium was breaking out as police armed with thick leather straps charged into the stands beating those not praying.

Some spectators tried to flee by running through the stands while others sought the open spaces of the field, where thousands were still on their knees praying.

Younger men, or those fast enough to escape, were seen taunting the turbaned police, sometimes throwing themselves on the ground in mock prayer before being chased away with wild swings of the strap.

No photographs were possible as the Taliban have banned all images of living things as idolatry. Journalists trying to enter the ground were questioned by gun-toting guards.

The game finally resumed after about 20 minutes and the last period of the first half was played out before both sides changed ends without the usual break.

It was a high-spirited match, with the Kabul team eventually winning 4-0 thanks to two spectacular goals by striker Mohammad Haroon which sparked unrestrained celebrations on and off the field.

Until recently the Taliban had demanded sports fans express their delight only by shouting "God is Great." Clapping is officially banned.

Last month in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, the Taliban stronghold, a visiting Pakistani youth side was arrested mid-game, taken away to have their heads shaved and deported for wearing knee-revealing shorts.

But last week in the comparatively liberal capital, the local side were wearing normal but very baggy shorts, while the visiting Afghan team had obvious extensions to bring their below the knee.

The Taliban's "Islamic" law also has rules governing men's facial hair, which cannot be trimmed, so every player was sporting a full-length beard.

Fans said that despite the bizarre restrictions, football was actually a source of relief from the real dangers of daily life in a city shattered by more than 20 years of war and ruled since 1996 by the fundamentalist militia.

Shah Mahmood, a driver, described the atmosphere in the stadium as "rather free."

"The football is good for the people in the absence of other fun opportunities in a rather free atmosphere... it has reinvigorated the people's spirits," he said.

Mohammad David, another Kabul resident, said that without jobs young men came to the stadium just to pass the time.

"Football is the most favoured sport throughout the country in which all the ethnic groups take part," he said.

It relieves the people from the pressure and stress of daily life, particularly from the fighting.

SYDNEY SIDELINES

SYDNEY, Sept 6 (AP): Australia's Governor-General Sir William Deane has declined to make a bilingual opening address at the Sydney 2000 Games, instead offering a polite "non" to Games organisers.

The International Olympic Committee wrote to Sydney organisers asking that Deane make a 17-word opening statement in French and then English, the two official languages of the Olympics.

The French Ambassador to Australia, Pierre Viaux, offered Deane private tuition to prepare for the September 15 opening ceremony, the Australian newspaper reported Wednesday.

Deane agreed initially but then declined after being told that the opening addresses at Lillehammer and Nagano Winter Games and the Atlanta Summer Games in 1996 had been made only in the language of the host nation, the report said.

SAMARANCH MEETS

ABORIGINES

SYDNEY, IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch met Wednesday with local Aboriginal leaders at the plush Regent Hotel in downtown Sydney rather than take a trip to Olympic Park to visit an Aboriginal Arts Centre.

Olympics Minister Michael Knight, who also heads the Sydney organising committee, arranged the last-minute meeting.

Knight's office said the IOC always meets with Aboriginal leaders during visits to Sydney and Wednesday's meeting was no different.

"There won't be any statements or any comments about the meeting because it was private," Knight's spokesman said.

SUDDEN SURGE IN TICKET SALES

SYDNEY: Queues stretching up to a kilometre (1,093 yards) outside ticket outlets gave Sydney Olympics organisers renewed hope Wednesday of making budget on ticket sales.

Alan Marsh, ticketing general manager for the Sydney organising committee, said 150,000 tickets were sold Wednesday, reflecting similar sales figures since Sunday.

"It depends on Indian govt"

DUBAI, Sept 6: A C Muttiah, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, said today that resumption of cricket ties with Pakistan depended on the Indian government, reports PTI.

"I may generally discuss the resumption of cricket ties with Pakistan Board chief Lt Gen Tauqir Zia who is also here. But a final decision will be subject to the views of the country," he told this news agency here.

Muttiah, who is here to attend the Asian Cricket Foundation (ACF) meeting, said if the government decided that we should not play against Pakistan we would abide by that. We had limited choice in the matter."

On the issue of Kapil Dev continuing as the national team's coach, Muttiah said that would be decided only after he returned to India after the ACF meeting.

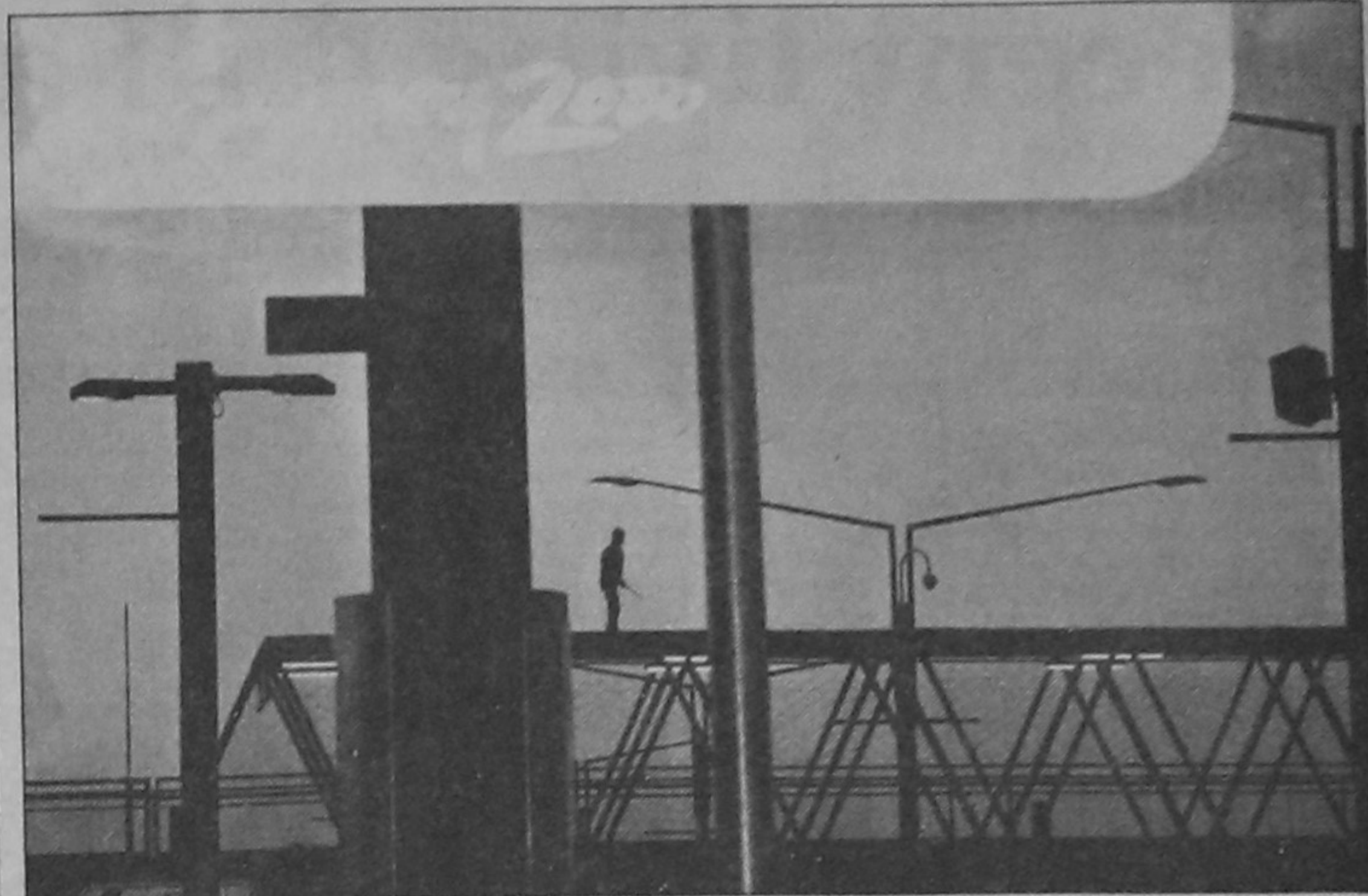
"I will have one more sitting with Kapil Dev before taking a final decision on the matter," he said.

Former ICC president Jagmohan Dalmiya and Sri Lanka Board president Thilash Sunathpala are also attending the ACF meeting.



Real Madrid superstar Raul Gonzalez with the Silver Boot trophy. The club's supporters awarded the forward with the trophy on September 5 as he was elected the best player of his team last season.

—AFP photo



With only nine days to go to the Olympic Games, a workman installing lights on a Sydney bridge yesterday. —AFP photo

Martina, Venus to face off



NEW YORK, Sept 6: World number one Martina Hingis beat Monica Seles for the sixth time in a row to reach the US Open semifinals, setting up a Friday showdown with Venus Williams and her 24-match win streak, reports AFP.

The 19-year-old Swiss top seed toppled Seles 6-0, 7-5 while 20-year-old Wimbledon winner Williams struggled past eighth seed Nathalie Tauziat 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 here Tuesday to set up their third Flushing Meadows matchup in four years.

Hingis is 9-6 against Williams, including US Open triumphs in the 1997 final and 1999 semifinals. But Williams won their most recent encounter in July at the Wimbledon quarterfinals.

"I would like to turn it around," Hingis said. "The last time I was playing very well again and this time I hope it's going to be a different story."

Hingis, seeking her first Slam title since last year's Australian Open, could halt Williams' four-tournament win streak and doom the chances for the all-Williams Open final Venus dreams of playing Saturday against sister Serena.

"I look forward to playing her again and hopefully breaking her streak," Hingis said. "I just have to not get too intimidated by what she's doing or her winning streak. I've got just to hang in there, play my game and not let her overpower me."

"I've got nothing to lose. She has got to prove herself now. She has won all these matches. She's obviously very confident going into these matches, winning even if she's not playing her best."

Williams bottomed out, literally and figuratively, against Tauziat by making 31 unforced errors on the court and an embarrassing one off it, landing on her rear after missing her chair.

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Nicolas Kiefer, the 14th seed, ousted Norman 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 6-1, 6-3 here Tuesday to book a quarterfinal date with Russian sixth seed Marat Safin, who beat fellow 20-year-old Juan Carlos Ferrero, the 12th seed, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2.

Sweden's Thomas Johansson, a 91st-ranked longshot, beat Australian qualifier Wayne Arthurs 6-4, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3, 6-4 and will next face 1999 Open runner-up Todd Martin, who advanced with his second stunning fightback in as many years.

Safin, Kiefer and Johansson equalled their best Grand Slam showing and Martin matched a 1999 fourth-round miracle comeback to beat 1998 French Open champion Carlos Moya of Spain 6-7 (3/7), 6-7 (7/9), 6-1, 7-6 (8/6), 6-2.

The 30-year-old Olympian, who rallied from two sets down last year to beat Britain's Greg Rusedski, saved a match point in the fourth set and won in

as she went to sit during a last-set changeover.

"I really missed," Williams said. "I was just angry and I couldn't stop."

"I couldn't stop laughing," Tauziat said. "It was funny."

Williams, despite her humbling bum-bble off the court and bungling on it, had the last laugh, however, and made a warning to Hingis -- "I always play better when it comes to the big matches."

Seles fell to 0-10 this year against the WTA's four top-ranked players and 2-11 lifetime against Hingis, who saw the match as a good indicator of her game looking ahead to Williams.

"It was kind of a little test -- was it enough against Monica and will it be enough against Venus," Hingis said.

Hingis won the first set in 14 minutes, allowing Seles only six points. It was the third love set in a row Hingis had taken from Seles, who made three double faults and 12 unforced errors in the span.

"I really started the match very sluggishly," Seles said. "I tried to get back into it. But it was way too late."

"I have to look at why that keeps happening. You have days when your timing is off. But against her, I have more days like that than I should. Maybe I panicked a little bit and against Martina you aren't going to get any easy points."

"I made so many unforced errors and the set was gone."

In set two, Seles fought back from 3-1 down to level at 5-5.

"She had a few chances and I made a step back," Hingis said. "I got, not really tired, almost scared, like please slow it down somehow. All of a sudden it's 5-all and I have to do something to take control of the match again, which I did."

Hingis held and broke, taking the match when Seles sent a forehand wide.

"In the second set I tried to

calm my own game down because that's where I started. At least I wasn't giving her free points."

Williams gave Tauziat their second set by spraying wild shots, making herself angrier with every error.

"I was a little bit upset when I was playing, about the way I was playing," Williams said. "In the second set I was angry and I don't play well when I'm angry. It's just not acceptable for me."

"I never get upset when I'm playing. But I did. It was strange. I was too busy thinking about the points before and not focusing on the points ahead. That was the main battle for me. I thought I had quit playing tennis like that."

Williams broke Tauziat's final set, stumbled through her worst set of the tournament, then broke Tauziat on a forehand winner for a 2-0 lead in set three.

"I didn't do anything much different, made a few more shots, maybe a little more determination," Williams said of the third set.

Tauziat netted a forehand to fall behind 4-0, answered with a break in the next game on a lob winner, but couldn't stop Williams from holding and breaking to win, the end coming on a netted Tauziat forehand.

"If she's going to win the tournament she needs to improve her level because I don't think she is going to win like this," Tauziat said.

Defending champion Serena Williams will face US Olympic teammate Lindsay Davenport in a Wednesday quarterfinal. The winner meets either 18-year-old Russian Elena Dementieva or German 10th seed Anke Huber in the other semifinal.

"Lindsay has a good shot against Serena," Hingis said. "Lindsay can be a very dangerous player for Serena."

Norman fails, Martin rallies



NEW YORK, Sept 6: Mistake-prone Magnus Norman stumbled out of the US Open, leaving his German conqueror, an American king of comebacks, a Swede who is 13-20 in 2000 and a corky Russian upstart to decide a Grand Slam final spot, reports AFP.

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The 30-year-old Olympian, who rallied from two sets down last year to beat Britain's Greg Rusedski, saved a match point in the fourth set and won in

four hours and 15 minutes, the longest match of the tournament, also like last year.

"I feel terrible but I feel great," Martin said. "It was awesome, better than last year."

Safin and fourth seed Pete Sampras, who won an unprecedented 13th Slam singles crown in July at Wimbledon, are the only top-eight seeds to reach the final eight at the 15 million-dollar Grand Slam event.

"Pete is going to be difficult to beat here if he gets his game going," said Norman. "He is still the one to beat at this tournament."

In Wednesday quarterfinals, Sampras faces nemesis Richard Krajicek, who leads their rivalry 6-3, and Aussie 19-year-old Lleyton Hewitt meets France's 37th-ranked Arnaud Clement in a battle of Slam quarter-final debutants.

Norman squandered his position as the top remaining seed in the field after losses by 1999 champion Andre Agassi and French Open winner Gustavo Kuerten.

"I let it slip," Norman said. "I was definitely disappointed. I was playing some good tennis. I had a great chance. But I let it slip."

Norman has won an ATP-best 58 matches and four titles this year, including Auckland.

Rome, Bastad and the Hamlet Cup. But Norman was broken eight times, failed on 14 of 16 break-point chances and committed 59 unforced errors.

"Normally I should win this match. But I didn't hit the ball very good. I made too many mistakes," Norman said. "I had so many break points, so many opportunities. Against a good player like Nicolas, you can't afford to let it slip away like I did. I made mistakes and he made some good shots."

"I was not sharp enough. Normally I would kill those shots. My rhythm wasn't there. My body wasn't there. My head wasn't there. And he didn't really make it easy for me. He didn't make any mistakes. He didn't give me any shots. I had to make everything."

Kiefer, whose one title of 2000 came in Dubai, avenged a four-set Australian Open quarterfinal loss but took six match points to finish off the French Open runner-up, who denied Kuerten 10 championship points before a Roland Garros loss.

"I played a great