

## Mixed moment



**SYDNEY.** Sept 22: American involvement in the men's tennis at the Olympics came to an abrupt and embarrassingly premature end on Friday as their US teammate Venus Williams moved a step closer to gold in the women's singles, reports AFP.

Jeff Tarango, the only American to get through the first round in the singles, succumbed to Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta, hours after highly-rated doubles pair Alex O'Brien and Jared Palmer fell at their first hurdle. "It's a bummer," admitted Tarango.

The rout cruelly exposed the weakness of a US men's team lacking Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi on a day that saw Williams give her aura of invincibility another polish.

The second seed brushed aside Germany's Jana Kandar like a pesky fly to set the stage for a quarterfinal showdown with Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, the last player to have beaten her.

Williams' 6-2, 6-2 win extended her unbeaten run to 29 matches while Sanchez-Vicario, seeded five, overcame Fabiola Zluga of Colombia 6-2, 6-0.

Sanchez-Vicario, whose win over Williams came in the quarterfinals at the French Open, was confident about her prospects of upsetting the odds again.

"She's on a good run," Sanchez-Vicario said. "But it is possible to beat her. I've played her before and I know I can win."

Sanchez-Vicario, seeded fifth here, needs a gold medal here to complete a unique collection after winning silver and bronze at Atlanta and Barcelona respectively.

Williams, who was cheered on by Chelsea Clinton, is bidding to add gold to the Wimbledon and US Open titles she has won this year in the best run of her career.

The two women have met seven times before, with Venus leading 4-3. "She beat me a couple of times when I was younger," she said.

"But things have changed now. I'm a little smarter."

Sanchez-Vicario's tenacious running down of every ball can frustrate big-hitting players like Williams into errors, but the American insisted she would not be reining in her aggressive approach.

"I can't change the way I play. I just want to keep going the way I am and try to do my best," she said. "When I do that, usually I win."

Friday's biggest upset came in the men's doubles, where O'Brien and Palmer fell at their first hurdle, continuing a nightmare run for the American men.

"I don't think I have felt worse in my entire career," a distraught O'Brien said after the American team was dumped out 6-2, 6-4 by Mark Knowles and Mark Merklein of the Bahamas. "I might go break every one of my racquets."

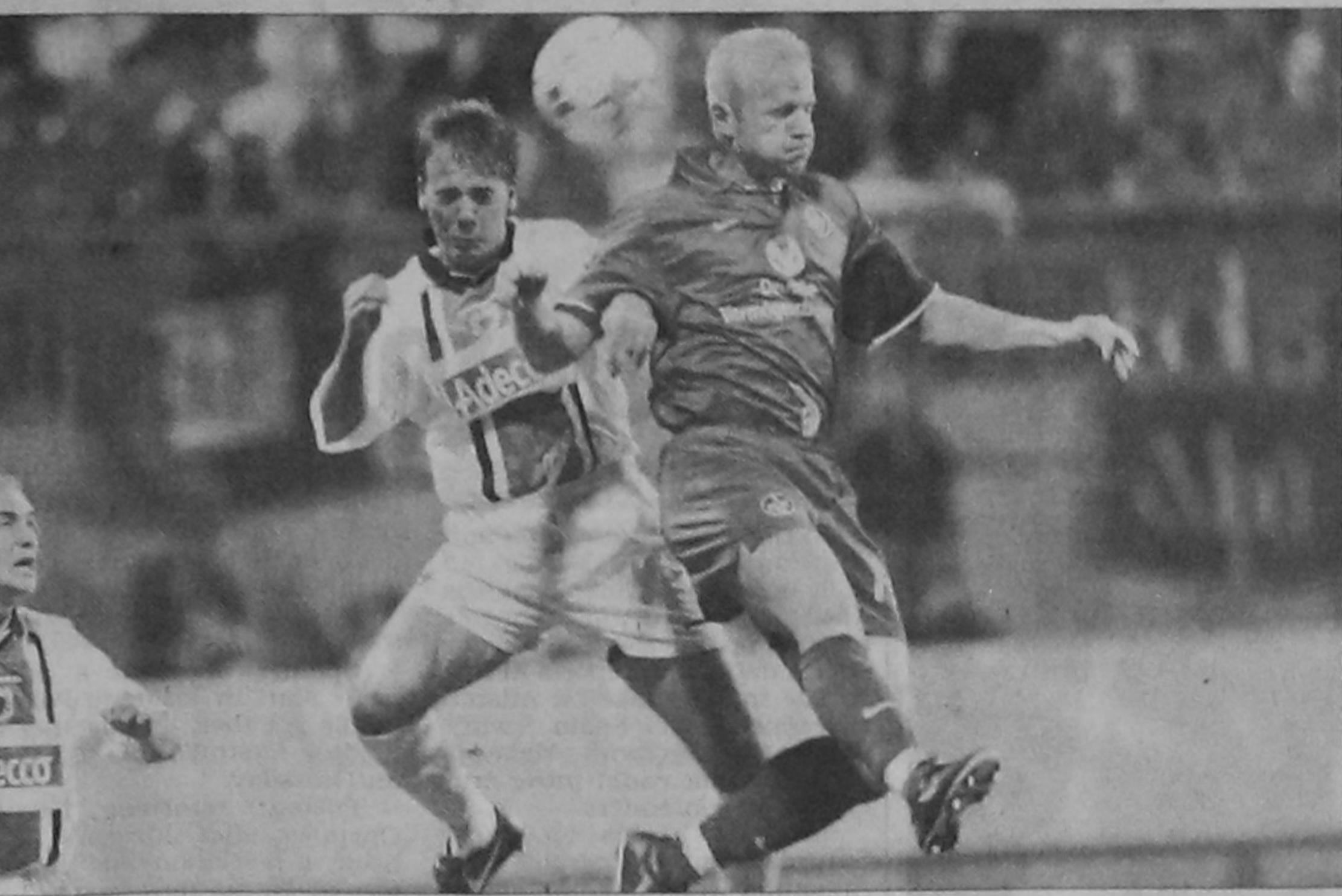
"I wanted this more than anything in my career and to be sitting here telling you we didn't get the job done — I feel like an idiot."

O'Brien and Palmer, who were given a bye into the second round, were caught cold by the Bahamians who were battle-hardened after a tough three-setter in the first round.

"They really got on to us early and that set the tone for the match," Palmer said.

Roger Federer of Switzerland, a 19-year-old who was a former world number one in juniors, demonstrated why he is being tipped for great things with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) win over Karol Kucera, the Slovakian who had dumped Tim Henman out of the tournament in the first round.

Alex Corretja, the only seed left in the top half of the draw, survived a scare against France's Arnaud Clement. The 6th seed was down 4-2 in the second and third sets before pulling through 6-7 (7/5), 6-4, 6-4.



Kaiserslautern's Igli Tare (R) and Robert Bowman of Bohemians Dublin are in quest of the ball during their UEFA Cup first round second leg fixture at Kaiserslautern on September 21.

—AFP photo

### UEFA Cup first round second leg

## Solace for Bohemians



KAISERSLAUTERN, N. Germany, Sept 22: Bohemians of Ireland humiliated Kaiserslautern, German champions just two seasons ago, with a 1-0 away win in their UEFA Cup first round, second leg, here Thursday.

But it still was not enough to put the Dubliners through to the next stage of the competition.

"It's one of the worst games we have played since I have been here," Kaiserslautern coach Otto Rehhagel groaned. "I warned the guys before the match it would be difficult if they scored. We just didn't get into the match. We took it too easy. No matter where I look I cannot find a single positive thing to say about tonight's game — except that we reached the next round."

Having won 3-1 in Dublin last week, Kaiserslautern limped to an aggregate victory but the real accolades go to the Irish visitors.

Sheer heart and determination made up for what they lacked in skill and Glen Crowe scored the only goal of the evening after 36 minutes, a simple tap in after being left unmarked.

He ought to have grabbed a second in the 77th minute after a catastrophic mistake by Kaiserslautern's Egyptian defender Hany Ranzy but Georg Koch somehow managed to block his powerful shot in a one-on-one duel.

"We were missing our exceptional players Youyi Djorkaeff, Mario Basler and a few others tonight and when they aren't present things don't work well in the midfield," a frustrated Rehhagel said. "That's not meant to be an excuse, though.

The guys who played tonight are all professionals and many are internationals and they just didn't come to grips with things."

As was the case a week ago, when Bohemians were reduced to 10 men, the Germans just could not crack their defence — which was certainly not formidable.

Jorgen Petersson had a promising 53rd minute shot blocked by keeper Wayne Russell while Miroslav Lovrenkovic scraped the crossbar with an injury-time shot.

It was an embarrassing performance by Kaiserslautern and their own fans jeered them off the field and after the game.

"What else can I say? We played at home and lost 0-1," Swedish striker Petersson said. "It was a catastrophic game. We played terrible football. The crowd should boo us — we deserve it."

### Premiership preview

## Ranieri to face the music



LONDON, Sept 22: Poor old Chelsea. A season which promised so much threatens to deliver little to the Stamford Bridge trophy room after a turbulent 10 days in south-west London, reports AFP.

In that time the FA Cup holders have said farewell to their sophisticated Italian manager Gianluca Vialli and seen morale crash to an all-time low.

Dressing-room unrest spilled over onto the pitch in Sunday's 2-0 defeat to Leicester with players arguing amongst themselves and the home crowd booing off the team amid chants for the disposed coach.

Chelsea, a team tipped by many to challenge Manchester United for the Premiership title, currently find themselves languishing fourth from bottom with just six points from six games.

There is also a real possibility that they could go out of the UEFA Cup at the first hurdle with only a narrow 1-0 lead to protect when they visit Swiss champions St Gallen next Thursday.

And if that wasn't bad enough new coach Claudio Ranieri faces a baptism of fire on Saturday morning when he takes his shell-shocked troops to Old Trafford to face reigning champions United.

But Ranieri, a man who thrives on adversity, believes he has what it takes to turn around the club's fortunes.

"I hope that I will bring all my professionalism and passion, all my love for the sport to Chelsea," said the former Atletico Madrid coach.

"I also hope to bring a lot of points as obviously the rest is not enough on its own."

Ranieri's sergeant-major approach is sure to ruffle a few feathers at a club where egoism is in short supply — but that does not faze the 48-year-old Italian.

"I will look at the players I've

got and put the best ones on the pitch. I don't look at how famous their names are and I've said this to all the players from the youth team up."

"It's too early for me to say whether there are any prima donnas in the squad. But the important thing is for everyone to unite — the team, the players, the fans."

No such problems at the Theatre of Dreams, however. It's very much business as usual with Sir Alex Ferguson's men unbeaten in the league and sitting pretty at the top of the Premiership.

United can't stop scoring in their league matches with an impressive 17 goals in six games — 11 of them at Old Trafford.

Chelsea can only dream of such form with just seven to their credit, and only one away from home.

Dutch international defender Jaap Stam could miss the match for United through injury.

He missed Wednesday's 0-0 draw against Champions League opponents Dinamo Kiev and is waiting for an operation on his troublesome Achilles.

Stam, 28, said: "I'm training but the Achilles continues to feel sore. After a warm-up it settles down but when I take long strides it is painful and stiff."

Should Stam fail to make Saturday's line-up Gary Neville, one of the players singled out by Ferguson for a superb performance in the Ukraine, will fill

### Deschamps injured

MADRID, Sept 22: Retired French international Didier Deschamps of Spanish side Valencia, will be out of action for up to three weeks after picking up a groin injury, the Spanish press reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

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got and put the best ones on the pitch. I don't look at how famous their names are and I've said this to all the players from the youth team up."

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"We know it is a difficult task but we are going to do our best to defend the gold," he said.

The Nigerians are aiming to become the first side to win consecutive Olympic golds since Hungary in 1964 and 1968.

Assistant coach Lawrence Akpokome, conceded the current squad was not as strong as its predecessor four years ago but is still optimistic.

"I would say the '96 team had more talent in terms of ability but all the same we have some very good players here too," he said.

The Gunners are expected to return after injury of star striker Ian Wright.

Italian stars Andrea Pirlo and Gianluca Zambrotta are doubtful for their showdown with fellow European giants Spain with in Sydney.

Striker Pirlo has a calf injury and midfielder Zambrotta is struggling with a damaged knee.

Italian coach Marco Tardelli said his side were enjoying their first taste of the host city.

"The weather is magnificent after the cold and rain in Melbourne and I'm sure this will help our cause," he said.

Deschamps' injury is a blow for

the French team.

Fixtures (kick-off 1400GMT unless stated):

**Saturday:** Bradford v Southampton, Coventry v West Ham, Derby v Leeds, Ipswich v Arsenal, Liverpool v Sunderland.

**Sunday:** Leicester v Everton (1500GMT)

## Sport

### Schalke to sue neo-Nazi fans

GELENKIRCHEN, Germany, Sept 22: German First Division club Schalke 04, are to sue five young neo-Nazis who they have also banned from their stadium, the club's management said Thursday, reports AFP.

The five youths are reported to have chanted neo-Nazi slogans during Schalke's 1-1 draw with Werder Bremen in Gelsenkirchen last weekend.

The fans will be charged withomenting race hatred, wearing the insignia of prohibited organisations, threatening behaviour and violence.

Schalke 04 also released a statement in which they praised their ground stewards who apprehended the five and claimed that neo-Nazism was unacceptable at the club.

"Right-wing extremism is not in itself a reality amongst the supporters of our club," underlined the statement.

—AFP photo

### Prmera Liga preview

## Galicia toast of Spain

MADRID, Sept 22: Out on a limb geographically the rural western province of Galicia is ruling the roost in Spain's *Prmera Liga* so far this season with both reigning champions Deportivo La Coruna and Celta Vigo setting the early pace, reports AFP.

The two neighbours have the only 100 percent records in the *Prmera Liga* after just two matches and have only conceded one goal between them, leaving the likes of Barcelona and Real Madrid trailing in their wake.

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