

China lift ABC tourney

From A Correspondent
New Delhi, Dec 22: China once again proved that they are the best women's basketball team in Asia after their convincing 78-59 victory over arch-rivals Japan in the final of the 15th ABC Basketball Championship for junior women at the Talkatora Stadium this evening.

By virtue of this victory China along with Runners Up Japan qualified for the world Championship to be held in the Czech Republic in September 2001.

The third place went to South Korea when they defeated Chinese Taipei 67-64.

Anurath Kumar, India's Minister of Tourism and Culture was the Chief Guest and distributed prizes.

RESULT OF THE FINAL MATCH

China - 78 : Japan - 59
Half Time Score : 44 - 35

ABC PROMOTION TROPHY

1. Most Valuable Player - Chen Nan (China)
2. Most Valuable Coach - Liu Qing (China)
3. Top Scorer - Oga Yuko (Japan)
4. Top Playmaker - Oga Yuko (Japan)
5. Top Rebounder - Kiseleva Julia (Uzbekistan)
6. Top Three Point Shooter - Kim - (DPR Korea)

FINAL RANKING

1. CHINA 2. JAPAN 3. SOUTH KOREA 4. CHINESE TAIPEI 5. DPR KOREA 6. THAILAND 7. MALAYSIA 8. UZBEKISTAN 9. INDIA 10. HONG KONG CHINA 11. SRI LANKA

B'baria cricket

From Our Correspondent
BRAHMANBARIA, Dec 22: Surja Tarun Cricket Club defeated Udayon Juba Samgha by 35 runs in the Shaheed Rangu Mia Cup-2000 at the Shahjadpur Junior High School playground today.

Winning the toss Surja Tarun batted scored 132 for eight in stipulated 30 overs.

In reply, Udayon managed 97 runs losing all wickets.

Hamid was declared man-of-the-match.

In the other match, Durjoy Cricket Club defeated Agradi Cricket Club by 40 runs at the same venue here today.

Winning the toss Durjoy made 12.5 runs losing all wickets.

In reply, Agradi scored 85 for all wickets in stipulated 30 overs.

Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Dec 22: Lords Club and Katakali Cricket Training Centre won their respective matches of the Sixth Bir Shrestha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Smriti Gold Cup cricket tournament today at Railway ground.

Winning the toss, Friends Circle were shot out for 101 in 23.2 overs.

In reply, Lords reached the target of 102 losing one wicket.

In the other match, Katakali defeated Mirchchik Sporting Club by 84 runs.

Border bucks up Warne

BRISBANE, Dec 22: Test selector Allan Border said today Australia's greatest wicket-taker Shane Warne, who is battling a finger injury, had shown encouraging signs in his nine-over stint in Thursday's tribute match in Brisbane, reports Reuters.

Warne took 1-38, claiming the wicket of retired England great Graham Gooch in the last Healy testimonial match.

"He is really happy with the way it feels," Border said in the Herald Sun newspaper.

"He just has to go through the techniques of bowling."

"But he has no pain, that's the main thing."

Victoria have named Warne in two 15-man squads for domestic matches against Western Australia (WA) next month.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS
- 1 Boxer
 - 4 Tackle a hurdle
 - 8 Cry out loud
 - 12 "Who am I judge?"
 - 13 Largest of the seven
 - 14 Cruising
 - 15 Cribbage
 - 16 Floor cover
 - 18 Frighten
 - 20 Museum stuff
 - 21 Comical rts
 - 24 Picture puzzle
 - 28 Wall cover
 - 33 Wish
 - 34 Dispatched
 - 36 White House monogram
 - 37 "I small"
 - 39 Floor cover
 - 41 Defeated, a la Karpov
- DOWN
- 1 Knight's backup
 - 2 Texas sch.
 - 5 Disco-style
 - 6 Canine scavengers
 - 7 Dream Team
 - 8 Russian spacecraft
 - 9 One of the Three Bears
 - 10 Pancake
 - 11 "was saying..."
 - 12 Old English double-U
 - 13 The pack
 - 14 Screw up
 - 15 Have bills
 - 16 Planes 'n' such
 - 17 Pl. Bob's longtime partner
 - 18 Biblical boat
 - 19 Capades venue
 - 20 Pitching stat.
- Solution time: 25 mins.
- DIET FOAM GAD TOWALCIMA USE GUERINETS EREN ROTO HASTY RAGED BEGS EHUO BORROWED MAE GENES ORE OBSERVED GITE TRAY FAKED BARR GUERRILLA ADD EMMANOTIR RAM RAIL SOUP

Year 2000 = Match-fixing



LONDON, Dec 22 (AFP): The year of the fix is how 2000 will be remembered in cricket history. A series of revelations that began with Hansie Cronje's forced admission that he had taken money from bookmakers and culminated earlier this month with Mohammad Azharuddin's life ban for match-fixing inflicted major damage to the international game's credibility.

As the game struggled to absorb the constant drip of successive revelations Australia confirmed their position of recent years as the world's best team.

Steve Waugh's side broke the West Indies 16-year-old record of 11 consecutive Test cricket wins with victory by an innings and 27 runs in the second Test over the West Indies at Perth earlier this month.

Waugh is a shrewd captain as well as arguably the most resilient batsman of his generation while his team's all-round ability in the field has turned the excellent into the routine.

However, claims that they were the best Test team ever were hotly disputed, although the way fast bowler Glenn McGrath's 300th Test wicket came as part of a hat-trick spoke volumes about Australia's current dominance.

Meanwhile England under captain Nasser Hussain, with shrewd advice from Zimbabwe coach Duncan Fletcher, started to show they were a team worth beating.

"Pressure is the most over-used word in sport but the turbulent domestic situation back home meant the Zimbabweans really were suffering as they lost 1-0 in England.

Then all-rounder Neil Johnson and batsman Murray Goodwin, two key Zimbabwe players, announced their retirement from Test cricket in order to pursue more lucrative domestic careers in South Africa and Australia respectively.

England, however, went on to win their first Test, set against the West Indies for 31 years, by the time Australia

made it 13 wins in a row at Adelaide, the West Indies had lost 17 of their last 19 overseas Tests.

In England a series of spectacular batting collapses - 54 at Lord's, for example meant the West Indies bowlers never had a chance, although Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh kept going magnificently.

At Headingley, England's fourth Test win was completed before the weekend. It was the first time a Test had been won inside two days since Australia beat New Zealand at Wellington in 1945/46.

Ambrose, having reached the landmark of 400 Test wickets earlier in the series, later announced his retirement.

However, Walsh, cut by the prospect of becoming the first to 500 wickets, nobly decided to soldier on.

Brian Lara seemed to spend more time with psychologists than in the middle but innings such as his 182 in Adelaide proved his talent was intact.

As his captain Jimmy Adams remarked: "It is very hard to get inside the mind of a genius".

No less remarkable was the continued ascent of Sachin Tendulkar. After an unbeaten double century against Zimbabwe at Nagpur in November, Tendulkar had scored 6,416 runs at an average of 57.28 including 24 centuries.

Unfortunately he was denied the chance to play Tests in Pakistan when the Indian government - not the cricket board - called off the tour.

Bangladesh made their Test debut and although defeated by India, Aminul Islam's 145 was the best maiden innings since Australia's Charles Bannerman made 165 not out in the very first Test match, against England in 1877.

Pakistan's year finished on a downbeat with a surprise 1-0 series loss to England. The tourists showed unexpected fortitude against spin and won the final Test to end Pakistan's unbeaten record at Karachi.

That match ended in mild farce when, after slowing the over-rate down, Pakistan captain Moin Khan complained to umpire Steve Bucknor about

the fading light.

Bucknor showed admirable firmness suggesting that officials need character more than the depressingly lengthy new set of Laws issued by MCC. The main change, five-run penalties for major misdemeanours, won't even apply to Test matches following a typical ICC fudge.

Sri Lanka's Arjuna Ranatunga announced his retirement amidst internal disputes. There may have been better batsmen but the World Cup winning captain was unmatched in his ability to annoy the opposition.

In South Africa, Ali Bacher, the man who kept the game going during the apartheid years and shepherded it through its international return stepped down.

The former Test captain did not deserve to have his last year in charge blighted by Cronje. There was better news, when thanks to the development programme he helped start, 21-year-old black pace-man Mfuenko Ngam was called up into the Test squad to replace the injured Allan Donald.

India's Lala Amarnath, their first Test centurion, died aged 80 and West Indies left-hander Roy Fredericks (57), whose astonishing 165 against the night of Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson at Perth in 1975 was undoubtedly one of the great Test innings, succumbed to cancer.

In December, England's Colin Cowdrey (67), arguably the most graceful batsman of his generation and later a distinguished administrator, as befitted a man born with the initials MCC, died of a heart attack.

He was the first to play 100 Tests - he marked the occasion with a hundred - and made six tours of Australia, the last aged 42 when summoned as an emergency replacement he faced Lillian Thomson with courage and classical technique.

It was a poignant coincidence that his death was announced on the same day that Azharuddin, the most elegant batsman of his time, was handed a life-ban for match-fixing.

The year of the Tiger

PARIS, Dec 22 (AFP): Tiger Woods reached a level of golf in 2000 that not only confirmed him as the world's number one but as the best player of the year, the rest of the world's golfers admitted it would be several years before anyone appeared who could challenge the 24-year-old.

While Nicklaus' comments might have been a bitter pill for seven-time European money winner Colin Montgomerie, number two Ernie Els, Davis Love or David Duval to swallow it simply underlined the greatness Woods had managed.

After failing to win at Augusta, Fiji's Vijay Singh lifting his first green jacket, Woods set after the third with a vengeance and it came as no surprise when he took the US Open, the British Open and the PGA to become the youngest player in history to have won all four Majors.

He also became only the second player in history to win three Majors in a single season. The other was Ben Hogan in 1953. He also became the first player to successfully defend his USPGA title for 63 years.

But it was at the US Open, played over the demanding Pebble Beach course in Northern California, that Woods produced four of the greatest rounds ever seen.

"It was awesome," said Els, who said it all close up as he partnered Woods over the final 18 holes.

"It was a dominating performance," added the second place Els, who finished 15 strokes behind the young American.

The last time any player

even came near to finishing 15 shots ahead of the rest of the field in a major was nearly 140 years ago when Old Tom Morris won the 1862 British Open at Prestwick by 13 shots.

"I've a pretty tough job ahead of me for the next ten years," remarked Els.

Impossible might have been a better word. And Els was to



TIGER WOODS

get another glimpse of his rival when they battled over the Old Course for the Open championship.

Woods won the championship with a record breaking 19-under par - eight shots clear of Els and Denmark's Thomas Bjorn. But for a bogey on the 17th he would have finished 20-under.

Els was stunned.

"Even if I really played as good as I could I don't think I would have got to 19-under like Tiger," confessed the South African.

"I'm playing a different tournament. I play the regular Tour event and Tiger plays his own event."

"It is incredible to watch a guy play so much better than the rest of the world and it is tough to sit down and talk about him every time. I might have to get used to it but that's the way it goes," he smiled.

Only in the USPGA Championship at a steamy Valhalla did Woods get a fright as he went for his third straight Major.

But instead of it being one of golf's big boys that threatened Woods, it was a little-known journeyman called Bob May.

In the most thrilling finish seen this season in the Majors, the world number one finished with a 67 for a four-round total of 270 - 18-under par - tied with Bob May, who closed with his third straight 66.

Woods beat May by a single stroke in a three-hole play-off, the first time such a play-off has been used in the tournament.

But nothing to take the shine off a season that saw Woods win a staggering 10 million dollars - more than Jack Nicklaus won in his whole professional career.

While Woods played his own, rarefied game, the rest were locked in their own private battle. Els might have been well short of Woods but he was clearly above the best of the rest. The laid back Els finished second in the first three Majors, an amazing feat.

In Europe there was a changing of the guard as Montgomerie saw his run of seven straight European Order of Merit wins finally come to an end.

But it went down to the final tournament of the season - the Volvo Golf Championship at Valderamma to Spain's Darren Clarke went into the tournament ahead but Westwood, while he failed to lift the one million dollar winner's cheque, finished far enough ahead of the Ulsterman to take his first European money list title.

While the best of the rest play in their own competitions Wood's is already eyeing next April's Masters. Victory at Augusta would see him become the first player in history to hold all four Majors at the same time. None will bet against him.

Other problems are exhaust from an ever growing number of vehicles, factory emissions and dust kicked up by the fast-developing city's numerous construction sites, Xie said.

Xie did not say exactly how the money would be put to use, but he promised Beijing's air would meet World Health Organization clean air standards by 2008.

Beijing will have air quality as good as Paris, "another contender for the 2008 Games, he said.

Anand wins Game Two

TEHRAN, Dec 22: Viswanathan Anand of India won the second game of the FIDE World Chess Championship Thursday after a resignation on move 64 by Alexei Shirov of Spain, reports Xinhua.

Shirov, also a Grand Master who was playing with the black pieces, chose the sharp Archangel variation of the Ruy Lopez, popular among some top players in recent years. But Anand's eighth move in the opening was a novelty, forcing Shirov into a minefield of sharp variations.

The Spaniard will play with the white pieces in game three of the six-game match today. The opening game ended in a draw after 34 moves.

Marion tops Reuters' poll

LONDON, Dec 22 (Reuters): US sprinter Marion Jones, who won three gold medals at the Sydney Olympics but failed in her quest to secure five, is the Reuters sportswoman of the year.

Gold medalists from the Olympic Games swept the top three places in the poll with Jones scoring 171 points out of a possible 250, ahead of Australian athlete Cathy Freeman on 120 and Dutch swimmer Inge de Bruijn who took third place with 103.

Wimbledon, US Open and Olympic champion Venus Williams came fourth with 97 points and Australian golfer Karrie Webb took fifth place with 31.

"Jones was the dominant figure at the biggest sports event of the year," said Joseph Romanos at the New Zealand Listener magazine.

Jones made an ambitious bid for five golds in Sydney but finished with victories in the 100 metres, 200 metres and 4x400 metres relay.

Marion Jones may have failed in her quest for five gold medals in Sydney but she is the supreme sprinter of the modern era," said Clive Ellis at the Daily Telegraph in London.

Fifty sports editors and journalists from 37 countries nominated up to five leading sportswomen. Each first place choice was awarded five points, the second-placed took four points and so on.

Runner-up Cathy Freeman won the 400 metres gold medal after lighting the Olympic flame in what became one of the most enduring and symbolic moments of the Games. "Cathy Freeman delivered all that was expected of her and more at Sydney," said Ori Lewis at Haaretz in Israel.

As Australia's most prominent Aboriginal sports person, Freeman was seen as a symbol of the country's 200-year struggle for reconciliation between blacks and whites.

"Her victory came to symbolise so much more than an Olympic gold medal," said Brian Walsh at the Herald Sun in Melbourne.

"It was a victory for her race, for tolerance in this country and managed to unite 19 million Australians - if only for one memorable night."

Third-placed de Bruijn capped an astonishing year by winning three individual golds in Sydney, all in world record time.

Just points behind de Bruijn in the poll, Williams became the first black Wimbledon champion since the late Arthur Ashe in 1975.

Williams defeated younger sister Serena in the Wimbledon semifinal before beating defending champion Lindsay Davenport in the final. She went on to win the US Open in New York and the singles title at the Sydney Olympics.

"She's the first female sports woman to also become a superstar," said Federico Fregni, a freelance Italian sports journalist.

Fifth place in the poll went to world number one women's golfer Webb, who won LPGA Player of the Year for the second season in a row.

2008 Olympics bid

BEIJING, Dec 22: China will make a major push to clean up Beijing's air to increase the capital's chances of landing the 2008 Olympic Games, the head of China's environmental agency said Friday, reports AP.

The central government will spend 10 billion yuan (1.2 billion dollars) per year to cut air pollution, which has improved the last two years but is still often dirtier than China's standards for industrial areas, said Xie Zhenhua of the State Environmental Protection Administration.

By the time the Games start, China will have spent a total 100 billion yuan (12 billion dollars) on cleaning up Beijing's air, he told a media briefing.

The biggest culprit behind the current abominable air quality is the coal used to heat most of Beijing's homes and apartments, fouling the air with sulfur dioxide.

Other problems are exhaust from an ever growing number of vehicles, factory emissions and dust kicked up by the fast-developing city's numerous construction sites, Xie said.

Xie did not say exactly how the money would be put to use, but he promised Beijing's air would meet World Health Organization clean air standards by 2008.

Beijing will have air quality as good as Paris, "another contender for the 2008 Games, he said.

Asia Cup tennis

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Results from the Asia Cup tennis tournament here on Friday, reports AFP.

Men's round-robin
India bt China 2-1
Mahesh Bhupathi (Ind) bt Wang Yu (Chi) 6-3, 6-4.

Zhang Yu (Chi) bt Harsh Manik (Ind) 6-3, 6-2.

Mahesh Bhupathi/Syed Fazeluddin (Ind) bt Wang Yu/Zhang Yu (Chi) 6-3, 6-3.

Women's round-robin
China bt Thailand 3-0

Li Ting (Chi) bt Napaporn Tongsaeng (Tha) 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Li Na (Chi) bt Suchan Vi-utrasat (Tha) 3-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Li Na/Sun Tian (Chi) bt Orawan (Tha) 6-1, 6-1.

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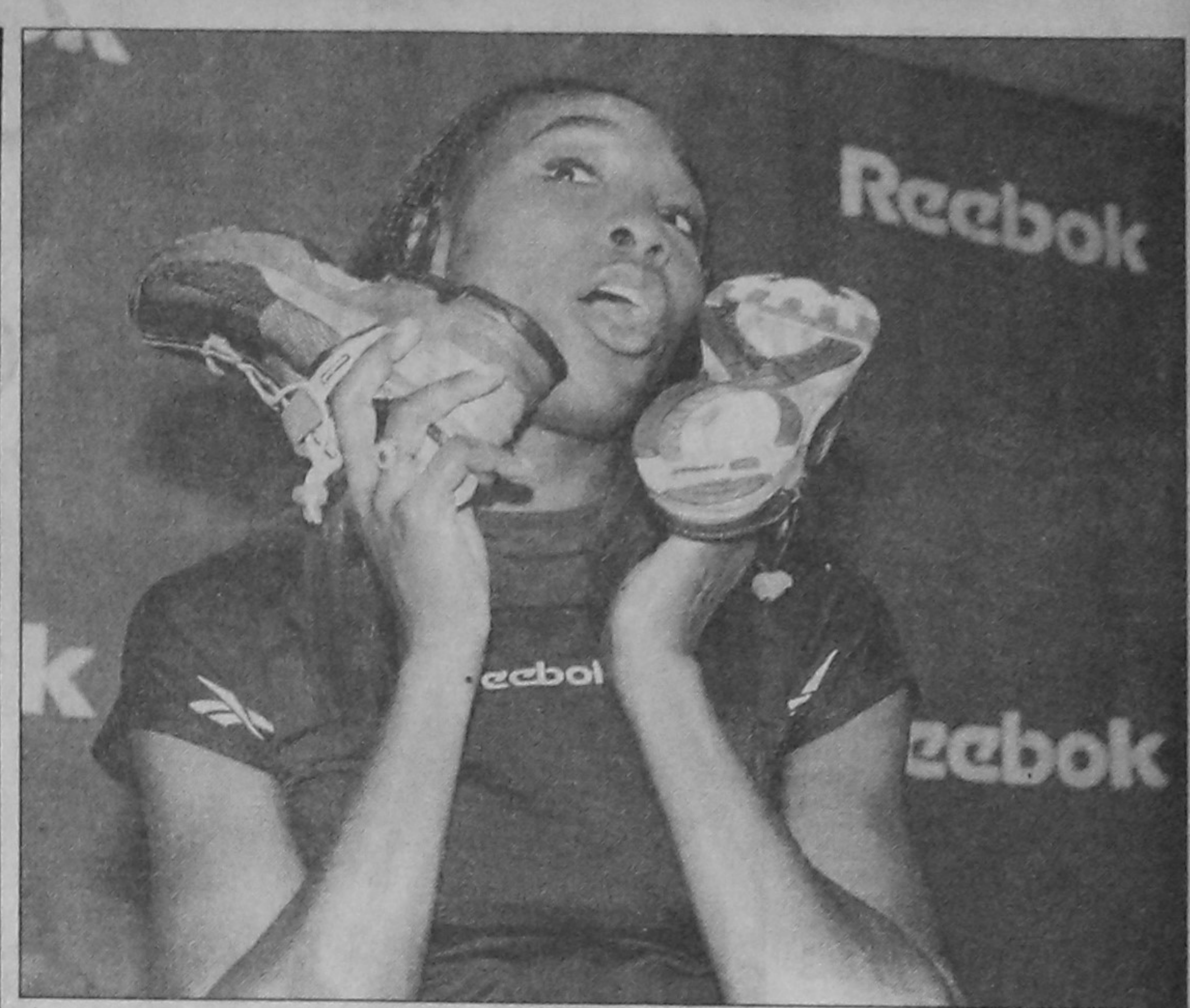
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American tennis star Venus Williams pose with Reebok sneakers during a press briefing in New York on December 21.

Reebok makes Venus happy



NEW YORK, Dec 22: Venus Williams capped the most successful year of her young tennis career by signing a five-year contract with Reebok on Thursday worth a reported 40 million dollars, reports AFP.

The 20-year-old American, who has been affiliated with Reebok since she was 11 years old, will launch the sports apparel company's "Defy Convention" campaign on Super Bowl Sunday in January.

"This is a big moment in my life. My whole life has been a dream come true after another," she said. "I'm overwhelmed with the confidence they've put in me. But I deserved it."

Williams started the year battling tendinitis in both wrists, but finished it with the Wimbledon and US Open titles. She went on to win her season with Olympic gold in Sydney.

"There's no better athlete, no better individual in the world who is better suited to represent our brand," Reebok Chief Marketing Officer, Angel Martinez, said. "Our goal is not to show Venus as a tennis player but Venus as a lifestyle icon, someone inspiring with the power of her presence."

Williams said she expects her tennis priorities to remain unchanged, and brushed off speculation that she might cut her career short.

"I like tennis. That's my top priority. As long as I'm happy and healthy on the court, I'll be in the tennis world," she said.

"This is what I want to do. All my other interests will have to wait. I'll be able to concentrate on them once I retire."

"It's an unbelievable uplifting milestone in women's sports," Fed Cup captain and US tennis legend Billie Jean King said via phone from her home in Arizona. "It's fantastic that she's recognised. I want to congratulate her on her commitment and on crossing all the boundaries."

In 2000, Williams became the first African-American to capture the Wimbledon crown since Althea Gibson in 1958 and added a second Grand Slam title to her resume, two months later, by claiming the US Open.

Winning Wimbledon

changed my career. It just added to my highlights. It opened the door for me to do more," said Williams, who posted a 41-4 record on the WTA Tour, winning a total of six titles along the way.

Her match victories included an impressive 35-match winning streak, which started in May and ended in October when she fell to fellow American Lindsay Davenport in the final of the WTA Tour event in Linz, Austria.

Williams said she has no plans to shift her focus next season to the pursuit of the world number one ranking. Instead, she said, her top priority will be winning the French Open.

"I'm not focusing on the numbers. If it happens, it happens," she said of the number one ranking. "What I really, really want to win is the French. I have two titles on red clay. The surface is not a problem. Naturally on clay, I'll have to hit a few more balls back."

"I can stay out there for six hours," she joked of the potentially arduous clay-court battles in front of her. "After that, I'll have to go."

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