

Stanford blocked from arbitration

CRICINFO, undated
Digicel, the main sponsors of West Indies cricket, has refused to allow Stanford to participate in the legal action...

Stanford wanted to be part of the arbitration proceedings "in order to ensure its position was fully and properly communicated to the arbitrator..."

The disagreement between Digicel, the WIBC, and Stanford is over the status of the Stanford Super Series. While Digicel maintains it is an official WIBC event...

Digicel had proposed a compromise earlier this month but their proposal was met by a counter-offer from Stanford stating they would not bring on board any of Digicel's competitors...

However, Stanford's terms were rejected by Digicel which maintained that it wanted the same branding on Stanford Superstars shirts as it has on the West Indies national team's shirts for the next five years.

Putin throws birthday bash for Advocaat

AFP, Moscow
Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin threw a special birthday bash at his country retreat for Zenit St Petersburg coach Dick Advocaat on Saturday.

As the champagne corks flew for the Dutchman's 61st anniversary, Putin also found time to celebrate the recent successes of Zenit St Petersburg - the team from the former president's home town.

"These are victories for the team but they are also personal successes," Putin told television station NTV.

Since taking over in July 2006, the former Netherlands manager has taken the Russians to a league championship, a UEFA Cup trophy - against his old club Rangers - and a UEFA Super Cup triumph against Manchester United.

Questioned about recent rumours linking him with a move away from the club, and a highly lucrative contract, Advocaat said he would make a decision soon.

"It's a difficult question. I have to make a serious decision because my family want me back home," he told news agency Interfax.

Asif cleared

FROM PAGE 17
"We have no objection as this is a private festival tournament," said PCB spokesman Mansoor Sohal.

He is only suspended from playing in any form of cricket organised by the PCB.

Asif, meanwhile, is confident of being cleared by the IPL drugs panel.

He is scheduled to appear before former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar, lawyer Shirish Gupte and doctor Ravi Bapat on October 11.

"My lawyer has prepared a strong defence for me and I am sure I would be cleared of the charge," said Asif.

Manohar new

FROM PAGE 17
Desai, Rajesh Bohra and Rajendra Singh Hans. The panel will be convened by Jagdale.

Lalit Modi remains chairman of the IPL's governing council while Shah has been appointed to a new post - the vice-chairman of the council.

The BCCI announced that cricketers who played the 2007-08 Ranji Trophy will earn 37,000 rupees per match day, up from the 25,000-26,000 rupees in 2006-07.

They also nominated umpires Amiesh Saheba and Suresh Shastri to the ICC panel.

The Indian board granted Affiliate Memberships to the Meghalaya Cricket Association, Nagaland Cricket Association, and Arunachal Cricket Association while Chhatisgarh State Cricket Association and Bihar Cricket Association were given Associate Membership.



PHOTO: INTERNET

CLOSER TO HISTORY: Fast bowler Steve Harmison (C) cleans up Kent tail-ender Martin Saggers (L) for a duck to complete Durham's win at the St Lawrence ground in Canterbury yesterday. The victory keeps them in contention for their first-ever county title.

Durham's maiden title

CRICINFO, undated

Callum Thorp produced the bowling performance of his career, and Steve Harmison overcame a fractured left wrist to scythe through the tail, as Durham marched towards their first County Championship title with a thumping innings-and-71-run victory against Kent at Canterbury.

The celebrations had to be put on hold for a while, as their only remaining rivals, Nottinghamshire, were set a massive and improbable 442 for victory against Hampshire, but at 3.57pm, Nottinghamshire's challenge officially petered out, and an historic achievement could be formally recognised.

Durham's victory had put them eight points clear of Nottinghamshire, on 190 to 182, and meant that anything less than a Notts win over Hampshire would suffice for a side that only became a first-class county in 1992.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Kent's capitulation confirmed their relegation for the first time since the two-division Championship was introduced in 2001.

The day began with Kent's backs firmly against the wall after the loss of five wickets on the third evening, but so long as Ryan McLaren and Justin Kemp remained, so too did hope.

Kemp moved to his fifty within minutes of the start, and the pair had taken their sixth-wicket stand to 107 when Thorp made the breakthrough - his sixth of the innings - as Kemp drove loosely outside off for Dale Benkenstein to take a fine catch at gully.

Thorp, who comes from Perth but has British-born parents, then claimed his career-best figures with his - and Durham's - seventh-wicket of the innings when Yasir Arafat edged to Michael Di Venuto at second slip for 18, but the prospect of him claiming all ten was ended when Harmison found his range to spectacular effect in his 21st over of the innings.

Having suffered a fractured left wrist after dropping a Geraint Jones cut shot on the third day, Harmison was bowling in a cast, but that didn't seem to affect his rhythm too dramatically. James Tredwell shouldered arms to a fine delivery that nipped back to detonate his off stump, and within three Harmison deliveries, it was all over.

Robbie Joseph pushed tentatively outside off for Di Venuto to claim his second catch of the morning, and Martin Saggers was comprehensively bowled for a first-ball duck.

As Saggers and the not-out McLaren trudged disconsolately off the field and into the second division, Harmison roared down the pitch in triumph, to be buried beneath a sea of his team-mates. Their triumph would not be ratified for another four-and-a-quarter hours - by which time the team bus was partying its way towards the M1 - but deep down, Durham already know that the title was theirs.

Bhajji sinks Delhi

CRICINFO, undated

The challenge facing Delhi on the fourth day -- they needed 265 runs with seven wickets in hand -- was always going to stretch them, and their batsmen, with the exception of Gautam Gambhir, caved without a fight.

They were bowled out within the first session: Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh exploited the cracks in the pitch to pick up seven wickets, and Rest of India won the Irani Cup for the 21st time by 187 runs in Vadodara.

The slide started in the second over of the day. Gambhir had batted aggressively on the third evening and needed a stable partner. Aakash Chopra, who had not opened because of an ankle injury, joined him with a runner. He had scored 182 in last week's Nissar Trophy and a confident 42 in the first innings against a versatile and experienced attack. Chopra's resistance in the second innings, however, ended with his first ball. He drove away from his body at a Zaheer Khan delivery and inside-edged it on to his stumps.

Kumble brought Harbhajan on inside the first hour to take advantage of the wearing pitch and the off-spinner struck immediately. Mithun Manhas tried to pad a delivery but the ball turned into him, deflected off the bat handle, and went to Rahul Dravid at first slip. The only point of interest after that was whether Gambhir, who scored steadily despite the regular setbacks, would reach his century. He fell on 91, edging an attempted cut off Kumble to Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

This was the last opportunity for the national players to get match practice ahead of the Tests against Australia and coach Gary Kirsten would have expected more. Before the start of the game he, and Kumble, had said this game was an important component in their preparation for the Australia series and each individual had a role to fulfil and understood it well.

If Sourav Ganguly doesn't make the Test squad, it will open up a vacancy in the middle order. Two of the contenders for the spot, S Badrinath and Mohammad Kaif, had the opportunity to push their claims in the Irani Cup but failed to turn in convincing performances. Badrinath looked in discomfort in the first innings and did not move his feet. He made a scrawly 16 off 62 balls before he was bowled while trying to cut. He was more confident during his 36 in the second innings before he was struck on the elbow and bowled once again by Ishant Sharma.

Kaif had made adjustments to his batting stance after chats with Kirsten but met with little success. He failed to convert a start in the first innings, top-edging a pull to midwicket, and edging a scorcher from Ishant off his second ball in the second innings.

One of the biggest positives was the performance of the bowlers. Zaheer Khan bowled wicket-to-wicket and focused on the batsman's weaknesses: he exploited Sehswag's slow footwork and trapped him lbw with one that cut in during the second innings. Ishant was hostile and extracted pace and bounce from a slow pitch. Munaf Patel proved his recovery was on the right path, while both Kumble and Harbhajan showed how dangerous they could be on a helpful surface. Only RP Singh was erratic with his line and length.

The most significant outcome from this game, however, was the resolute batting of Rahul Dravid, who opened for Rest of India. His poor form over the last year has hurt India but here he succeeded in the most demanding of situations. As the wicket grew slower, Dravid stuck it out for nearly five hours in the second innings. He played the majority of the deliveries confidently, used soft hands to block short balls aimed at the body, and waited for the bowler to feed his strengths.

It was the sort of preparation Dravid would have hoped for ahead of the Australia series and it was a terrific example of mental discipline for the rest to follow.

Novak Djokovic and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga will face off on Sunday in a repeat of their Australian Open final seven months ago after both advanced in at the Thailand Open. Djokovic struggled through a 53-minute first set against third seed Tomas Berdych before the floodgates opened for a 7-5, 6-1 semifinal defeat of the Czech player.

Tsonga, the number two, took just 52 minutes to set up the grand slam re-match, stamping his authority on fellow Frenchman Gael Monfils with a 6-0, 6-3 win.

"This will be my chance to take revenge," said Tsonga, who lost to the world number three Serb Djokovic in four sets in Melbourne.

"This is a totally different match from then. I'm confident and I like my chances."

Djokovic was equally enthusiastic about the rematch: "It's great to meet Jo again after that final. It will be very interesting to play him."

"It's our second match and our second in a final - anything can happen. I don't see myself as a big favourite, Jo has been playing fantastic tennis, serving and moving well. He's very motivated."

Djokovic and Berdych duelled throughout the first set until the final game, when a Djokovic return on set point tipped over the net cord to land dead on the Czech's side.

The Serb then took quick advantage, going up a break in the third and producing a 3-0 lead before Berdych

FORMULA ONE Massa pips Hamilton to pole

AFP, Singapore

Ferrari's Felipe Massa stormed to pole position for the inaugural Singapore Grand Prix Saturday, topping the times during qualifying ahead of McLaren's Lewis Hamilton.

It was a crucial drive by the Brazilian with front row of the grid likely to be decisive on the bumpy Marina Bay street circuit where overtaking will be possible, but difficult.

His lap of 1:44.801 was 0.664 of a second ahead of the British world championship leader, who is one point in front of his rival in the title race with four Grand Prix left.

Defending world champion Kimi Raikkonen, desperate for a win here to keep alive his slim hopes of retaining his title, was third fastest for Ferrari and BMW Sauber's Robert Kubica was fourth in the Toro Rosso.

Heikki Kovalainen, in the second McLaren, was fifth ahead of Nick Heidfeld for BMW Sauber.

New kid on the block Sebastian Vettel, winner in Italy earlier this month, was seventh in his Toro Rosso with Timo Glock eighth, Nico Rosberg ninth and Kazuki Nakajima tenth.

Forecasters had said there was a 50 per cent chance of rain over the weekend, but it held off Saturday, allowing the cars to be pushed as hard as possible in hot and humid conditions under the powerful spotlights illuminating the track.

But it proved to be a disastrous evening for Fernando Alonso, who was the world champion in 2005 and 2006, topped the final practice and looked to be good for pole position.

All went wrong in the second qualifying session when the engine of his Renault cut out, leaving the frustrated 19-time Grand Prix winner no option but to climb out of his car and put his head in his hands.

It means the Spaniard will have to start from 15th, effectively ruling out any chance of victory here in only the third time he has qualified outside the top 10 this year.

Force India's Giancarlo Fisichella, whose car lifted off the ground after he misjudged a chicane and hit the barriers in the practice session, pulled off a similar stunt in qualifying and will start last in the grid.

Fellow Force India driver Adrian Sutil joins him at the rear of the race.

New home for carrom ball?

INTERNET, undated

Sri Lanka's 23-year-old right arm off-break and leg-break spin bowler Ajantha Mendis' 'Carrom Ball' delivery which has mesmerised the batsmen may find a place in the English dictionary.

According to the Toronto-based Sri Lankan lawyer and cricket enthusiast Mahendra Mapagunaratne, the request has been sent to London.

"Yes, I have received a very positive response from the editor," he said from Canada.

While, Cormac McKeown, the Senior Editor of Collins Dictionary said, "It just so happens that we are in the process of gathering new words for a new edition of our Collins English Dictionary: complete and unabridged."

"While I cannot say without further research in our databases if the word (Carrom Ball) has attained sufficient frequency in the language to merit a place in the actual A-Z text, a look at the frequency in Google alone seems to indicate that the word has already achieved some currency, so the chances are quite good. It now remains to be seen whether it has longevity as well as originality," he added.

Ajantha Mendis who bowled a mixture of googlies, offbreaks, top-spinners, flippers and legbreaks took 26 wickets against India. He picked up a chunk of his wickets through this delivery.

Katich left

FROM PAGE 17 included three fours.

The all-rounder, 27, is set to figure in the opening Test of the four-match series starting in Bangalore on October 9 as a seamer and middle-order batsman.

Left-arm spinner Gajendra Singh, 20, picked five wickets for 58 runs, exposing Australia's vulnerability to spin.

BRIEF SCORES

AUSTRALIA: First innings 218 all out in 77.1 overs (Katich 73, Watson 30, Singh 5-58)

Now PCB sues

FROM PAGE 17 your client is not fair in his transactions and is apparently siphoning off the amounts received for principal Essel on behalf of the players," the notice states.

"All whimsical and capricious claims made by your client in his notice are vehemently denied as false and incorrect."

"It is rather Youself who has suffered colossal financial losses due to the said arbitration proceedings pending in India."

Kirsten backs Dravid

Cricket

PTI, Vadodara

Rahul Dravid came for the Irani Cup here with a cloud of uncertainty hovering over his future but the under-pressure middle order batsman returns with some runs under his belt and, more importantly, the backing of both India captain Anil Kumble and coach Gary Kirsten.

Like the sidelined Sourav Ganguly, Dravid too came a dud with the bat in Sri Lanka but the former captain managed 46 in the first innings and a more convincing 69 in the second essay against Delhi in the just-concluded Irani Cup tie.

He may not have looked fully convincing, but Kirsten believes Dravid has achieved his goal from this tournament ahead of the Test series against Australia.

"I think it turned out to be a good outing for him," Kirsten said, adding "He achieved what he had come for." "He is a key player for us and has been successful for years. I do not look at a particular game, but performance over 6-7 months. If someone has been in form for that period, it does not matter if he does well or not in a game."

"He knows now we face Australia, the world number one team and it should give boost his confidence," Kirsten said.

Kumble was equally happy with Dravid's tenacity and said Dravid, once again showed how to play in adverse conditions.

"He is a class act. In this kind of situation, you have to bat long and grind the bowlers. He knows that and he did a great job. It obviously feels good to have some runs behind him before the series against Australia," Kumble said.

Meanwhile, the Irani Cup gave Kirsten a chance to find out if he has the right ammunition to blow

away Australia's redoubtable batting line-up in the upcoming Test series and the India coach says from whatever he saw over the last four days, he has no reason to be worried.

"Barring (last minute) injuries, the bowling unit looks in good shape," said Kirsten.

For the winners, Zaheer Khan and Munaf Patel were among wickets, while Ishant Sharma stood out for Delhi with his hostile spells. Among the spinners, both Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh made their mark and Kirsten said he was happy with their intensity.

"I'm very happy with the way they went about their business. All of them looked in good form here and they were hitting the right areas. I'm also happy with the great intensity they showed here and they should feel confident."

"We still have 12 days before the first Test against Australia and we have to make sure that our preparation is right up there," Kirsten said.

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'Migraine, not temper'

Cricket

PTI, New Delhi

Delhi captain Virender Sehwag returned home midway through the Irani Cup owing to migraine and not because of any resentment, a senior team official said.

Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) Sports secretary Sunil Dev said Sehwag returned with him on Friday night due to migraine and nothing else.

He has not been feeling well and the pain was there all along. It increased on Friday and because he has already been dismissed in the second innings, he could well afford to return with me," Dev said.

Sehwag's abrupt return led to wild speculations here with some claiming that the Delhi captain left in a huff to protest the poor accommodation and fuming why they were not accommodated in the same hotel where Rest of India

players are staying.

A few also claimed that Sehwag was bitter after being abused by Munaf Patel and hence once he got out in the second innings, he didn't want to stay longer in the city.

Dev, however, dismissed such speculations and said, "This is all nonsense. He never had an issue with hotel and he returned purely because he was not feeling well and circumstances allowed him to comeback."

"My doctor told me that since I have to join the Indian team's camp next week it is better that I take rest now," Sehwag said.

"My return has nothing to do with Munaf Patel. These things are common on a cricket field and no cricketer will return home because of that. I just want to be better prepared for the series against Australia," he said.

Apart from the on-field spat with Munaf, there was another speculation that the Delhi skipper, who scored 43 and 3 in the two

innings of the Irani Trophy match was unhappy with the accommodation offered to them.

"It is a non-issue and shouldn't be connected to my return. The reasons of my return are purely medical," he said.

With Delhi struggling at 113 for three against Rest of India on Friday at the time of Sehwag's return, people even raised doubts about his commitment. However, he took a dig at his detractors and said he has always been a "team man".

"If you look at my record I have never missed a chance of playing for Delhi. Not only this, I always make it a point to turn out for my employers ONGC as well. Whoever doubts my commitment doesn't know me at all. I am a complete team-man whether playing for Delhi or India or another team," he insisted.

"Where do all these questions on my commitment go when I hit a six or a four even when batting in the 90s? I always play for my country and the team," he added.

Djokovic-Tsonga showdown

Tennis

AFP, Bangkok

Novak Djokovic and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga will face off on Sunday in a repeat of their Australian Open final seven months ago after both advanced in at the Thailand Open.

Djokovic struggled through a 53-minute first set against third seed Tomas Berdych before the floodgates opened for a 7-5, 6-1 semifinal defeat of the Czech player.

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"This is a totally different match from then. I'm confident and I like my chances."

Djokovic was equally enthusiastic about the rematch: "It's great to meet Jo again after that final. It will be very interesting to play him."

"It's our second match and our second in a final - anything can happen. I don't see myself as a big favourite, Jo has been playing fantastic tennis, serving and moving well. He's very motivated."

Djokovic and Berdych duelled throughout the first set until the final game, when a Djokovic return on set point tipped over the net cord to land dead on the Czech's side.

The Serb then took quick advantage, going up a break in the third and producing a 3-0 lead before Berdych

could react, completing victory in just under 90 minutes after a double-break in the second set.

"I broke him twice in the second due to his bad service games," said Djokovic. "But it felt like I woke up from a dream in that second set."

"I was really sleepy the last two days and especially in the first set." Djokovic will be competing for his fourth title of the season and first since Rome in May. He is into his 16th ATP singles final (standing 10-5) and boasts a 58-13 record in 2008.

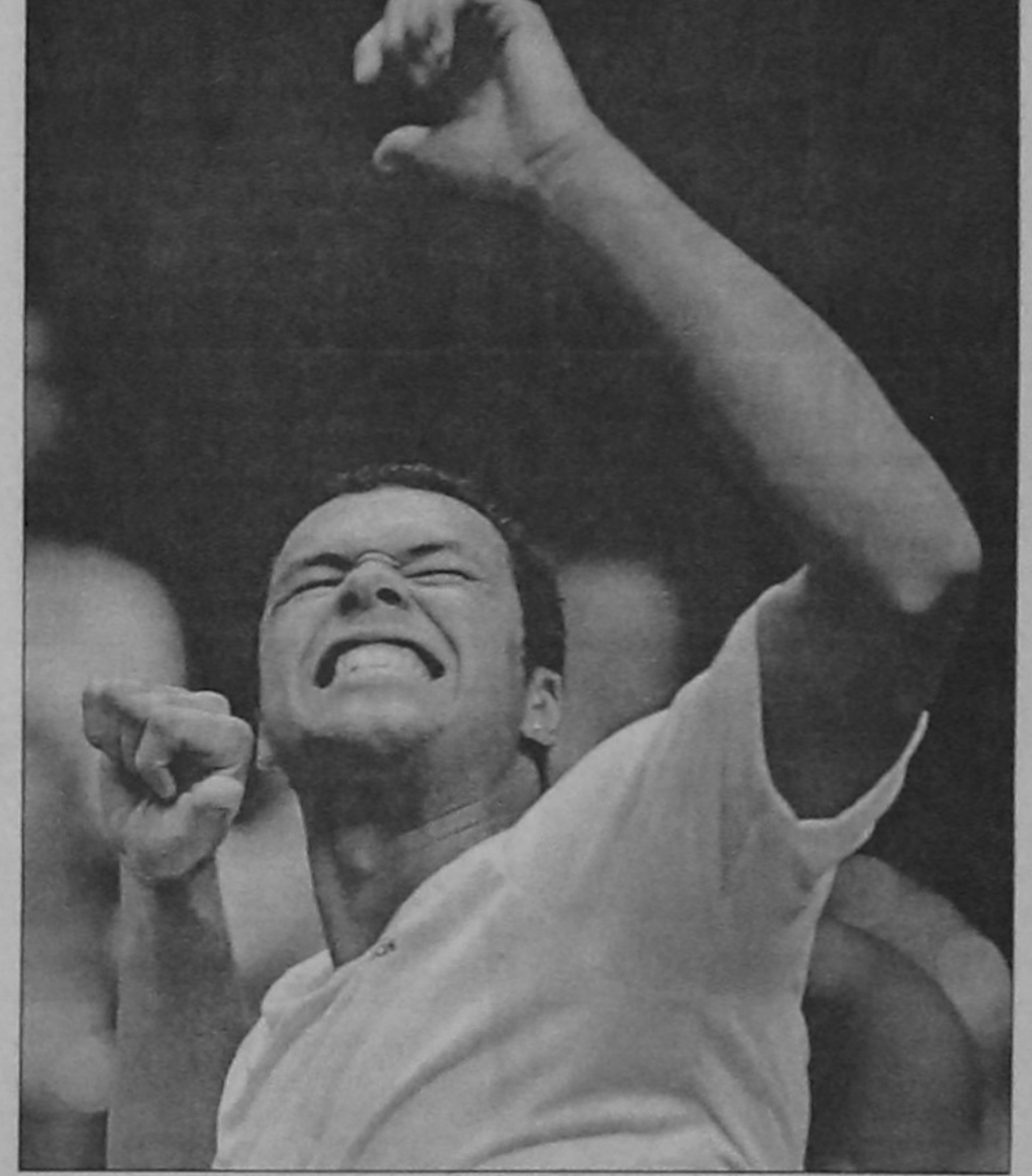


PHOTO: AFP Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France celebrates after beating compatriot Gael Monfils in the Thailand Open semifinals in Bangkok yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

CRABWORD By Eugene Sheffer
ACROSS: 1 Glaswegian, 5 Lose rigidly, 8 'Hey, you!', 12 Hodge-podge, 13 Expert, 14 Mimicry specialist, 15 Portent, 16 Sternward, 17 Ashen, 18 Of a cultural group, 20 Ditty's mouth-piece, 22 Prior night, 23 Sailor's assent, 24 No. 1, 27 Not very much, 32 Agit, 33 Aristocrat, 34 Jean, 35 Colleague, 38 Press, 39 Gear projection.
DOWN: 11 Hosp. drip, 21 Snitch, 24 Lingerie item, 25 Common Mkt., 26 Become inattentive, 28 Swiss canton, 29 Modern, as technology, 30 Berlin's 'What?!', 31 Coffee-break time, 36 Activities, 37 Future phalarope, 38 Acquire oxygen, 41 Plow puller, 42 Reover, 43 Bully's target, 44 Suspend, 46 'Meta-morphoses' writer, 47 Divide, 48 Deuce together, 51 Weeding implement.

CRYPTOQUIP
SCBWELE LYL FJSZLFL GLDCS
VJ VCBVZ, GBQ WCQ TQ TDD
TGCYL, U IBKCCIL U STI
ZTFVLE QC QZL QLLQZ.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR MADE SOME TAPIOCA, COULD YOU SAY THAT THE PROF IS IN THE PUDDING?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals E