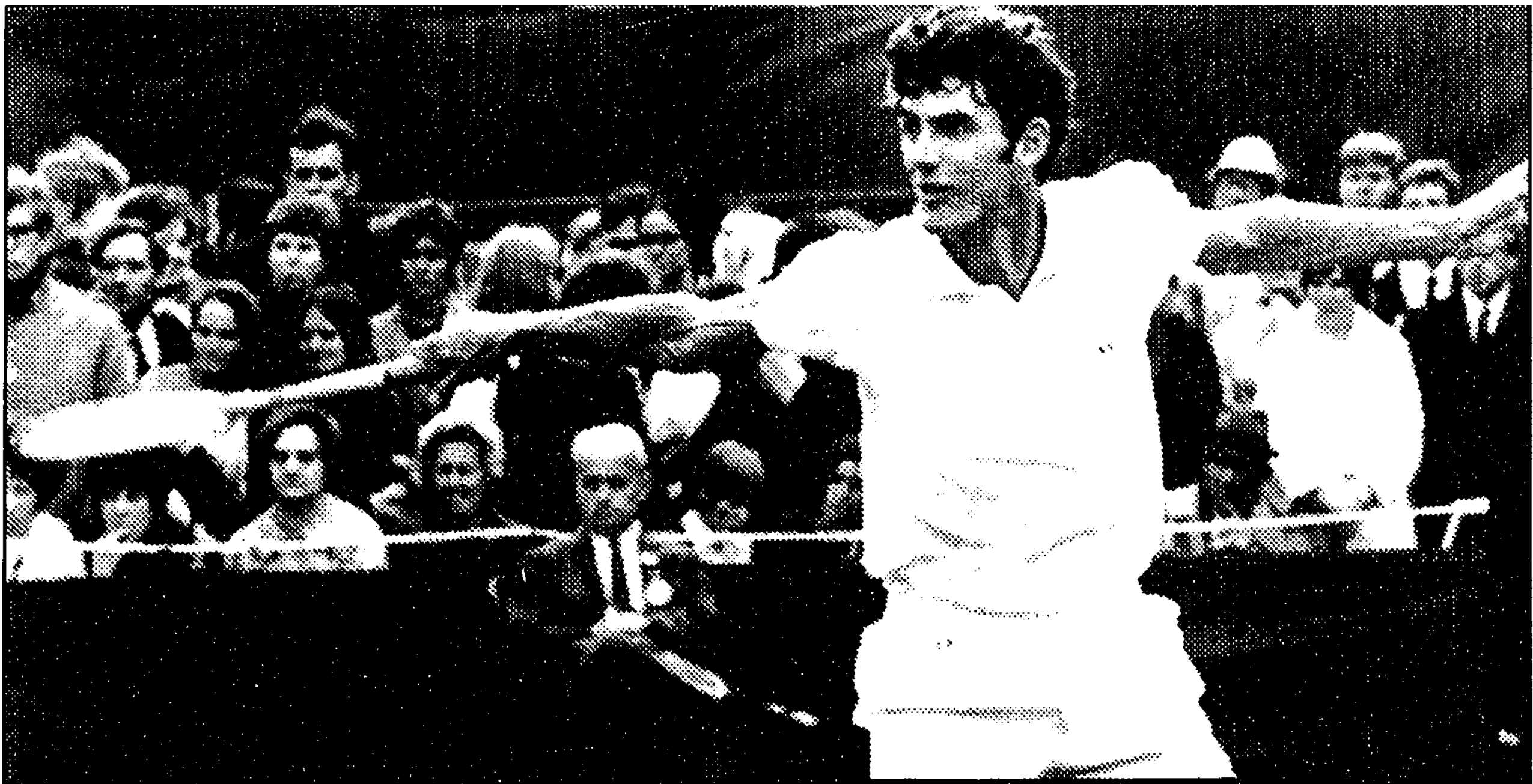


# Mailbox



United Press International

Herb Fitz Gibbon during his upset victory over Nikki Pillec at Wimbledon in 1968

## Recalling Bristol But Not the Foe

To the Sports Editor:

I remember it well. Bill Finger's article (The New York Times, June 22) on Bristol, a pre-Wimbledon warmup tournament, brought back fond memories.

Bill got it all right: the mysterious English ways like orange squash (actually the lack of ice threw me more); the soft, yet low skidding grass (great for my serve-and-volley game); private billeting (I stayed with the Jones family, he a professor and she an archeologist — yet they had no ice box); and best of all, my close match with Arthur Ashe.

I remember all this fondly, for I was at the height of my tennis powers. I felt on a given day I could beat anyone in the world, and while I had my share of bad losses in Europe, I used to brag to my traveling companion, Allen Fox, the current Pepperdine tennis coach, that I had never lost to anyone I'd never heard of. For an American serve-and-volleyer this was saying a lot, for there were many obscure Continentals roaming the slow European clay circuit armed with dependable ground strokes.

Last summer I played a small weekend tournament in Minneapolis composed of locals and a few players from the minor leagues of big-time tennis, better known as qualifiers. I beat one of these fellows, a Mexican whose name escapes me now, in three long sets in the semis, and was quite proud of this win over my young opponent.

I called Fox the next week to crow over my excellent results of the previous weekend. "Who'd ya beat?" was his first question. "A Mexican," and when I gave his name, Fox replied, "Never heard of him." Well, neither had I until after I beat him.

So after 12 years it has come full circle. While once I bragged of never losing to any unknown, I now claim as good victories players I have

never even heard of before and whose names I can't remember. I will now add Bill Finger to this latter list, for while he tells a marvelous story, I have absolutely no recollection of our match.

HERB FITZ GIBBON  
New York

## Ballplayers As Investments

To the Sports Editor:

It was such a pleasure to read Murray Chass's July 24 article "Winfield Creating Yank-Met Skirmish," where he discusses the value of ballplayers and the remuneration they receive.

The myth has long been perpetrated that ballplayers are overpaid and that, as a result, the owners and the general public suffer.

Being a believer in the free-market system, I find those beliefs heresy. The fundamental reason, I feel, for the pervasiveness of those beliefs is the misconception that ballplayers are salaried employees of a ball club. They are plainly not. The terms and conditions upon which ballplayers are acquired make them more akin to capital investments on the part of the owners than anything else. If such is the case, then their value must be determined as any other capital investments would.

The fact that players like Reggie Jackson — who by the way is as exciting to watch even when he strikes out — was acquired for a song is now history. In terms of the cash flow that Jackson generates, he is probably a worthwhile investment at even three to four times what he was bought for a few years ago. George Steinbrenner, the immaculate entrepreneur that he is, I'm sure recognizes the enormous value of what he has.

Baseball is a sport of enormous entertainment value, and as such, competes with other activities that one could pursue for the purposes of leisure. The fact that the public throngs to stadiums in growing numbers is

testimony to the fact that the so-called high salaries paid to superstars are still small compared to the returns they provide as investments.

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## Finding Magic In Mets' Offices

To the Sports Editor:

Met magic is back — both on the field and in the front office. There is both heartache and joy on the field, the same type of emotions I experienced as a youth rooting for the Dodgers and as an adult rooting for the early Mets. But this is about the Met management.

On Friday night, July 11, my wife and I attended the Met-Pirate game at Shea. The Mets lost, 4-3, but they gave us a ninth-inning thrill, getting men on base and almost winning the game. The evening ended in frustration and anger because it took us an hour to get out of the parking lot after waiting almost as long to get in.

I called the team office the following Monday to register a complaint and offer a suggestion as to how the postgame jam could be eased.

I spoke to the executive secretary of Jim Nagourney, the Met vice president and business manager. I was thanked for calling with the complaint and told that the Mets want their fans to have a good time with a minimum of inconvenience. They would try to get the parking concessionaire to provide faster and more convenient parking.

A week later I received a letter from Mr. Nagourney again apologizing for the inconvenience.

My wife and I were surprised and pleased with a Met management that cares. I have returned to Shea Stadium.

HARRY TAYMAN  
Flushing, Queens

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