



WATERPOLO OR SOCCER? Never mind, the name of the game is "fun". —Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Pan-American Games open

HAVANA, Aug 3 : Cuba's President Fidel Castro, making the shortest and least political speech of his long career, on Friday opened the 11th Pan-American Games, the biggest international event ever hosted by the communist-ruled Caribbean island, reports Reuter.

It was a remarkably short speech for the veteran President, who is known for his fiery, political orations lasting several hours. He was scrupulously observing International Olympic Committee (IOC) regulations, which forbid any political, religious or commercial propaganda in competitions held under its auspices.

Following a colourful, eye-catching opening ceremony and a march past by the 39 national teams taking part, Cuban high jump world record holder Javier Sotomayor lit the Pan-American flame on a pyre on one of the stadium's sides.

More than 4,550 athletes from north, Central and South America and the Caribbean will be taking part in the 31 sports scheduled during the two-week event. The first event today will be the men's marathon through the streets of Havana.

The well-rehearsed opening ceremony was an attractive display of historical, cultural and sporting themes performed by students and schoolchildren and accompanied by a lively repertoire of Cuban and Latin American melodies.

Edberg closer to Volvo crown

LOS ANGELES, Aug 3: Top-seeded Stefan Edberg used his serve-and-volley game to its best advantage to defeat Aaron Krickstein 6-4, 7-5 Friday in the quarterfinals of the \$225,000 Volvo tennis tournament, reports AP.

Edberg lost only seven points off his serve in the one-hour, 20-minute match and was never broken. After Edberg broke Krickstein in the third game of the match, the two stayed on serve until the 11th game of the second set.

my serve and I got my timing down. I've worked hard at that and it's paying off." Krickstein, who split six previous matches with Edberg, was hoping to get into a tiebreaker in the final set. Krickstein has won all six of the tiebreakers the two have played.

Edberg, the defending champion, credited his improved serve-and-volley for the easy victory.

In other quarterfinal matches, fourth seed Brad Gilbert cruised to a 6-1, 6-3 victory over Steve Bryan, a qualifier. In a match of unseeded players, Stefano Pescosolido of Italy defeated Scott Davis 7-6 (7-5), 6-3.

"I think he definitely is the best volleyer when he's on, especially his backhand volley." In other quarterfinal matches, fourth seed Brad Gilbert cruised to a 6-1, 6-3 victory over Steve Bryan, a qualifier. In a match of unseeded players, Stefano Pescosolido of Italy defeated Scott Davis 7-6 (7-5), 6-3.

A canter for Capriati

CARLSBAD, California, Aug 3: Second seed Conchita Martinez and fourth seed Jennifer Capriati posted straight set victories on Friday to set up a semifinal showdown at the \$225,000-dollar Mazda tennis classic, reports Reuter.

Martinez raced through her opening set in 23 minutes using an array of topspin ground strokes to keep Graham off balance. Graham, a qualifier who of Switzerland 6-3, 6-3.

Martinez completed the victory on her fourth match point — the 22nd point of the game.

The seventh-ranked Martinez, who helped bring Spain the Federation Cup title last week, held off a late challenge by American amateur Debbie Graham for a 6-0, 7-5 win.

JENNIFER CAPRIATI upset seventh seed Barbara Paulus for each of the quarter-finals, regrouped and provided more of a challenge in the second set.

"I just played well today," Capriati said. "I felt like nothing was going wrong in the first set. I served well and my shots were going in."

Aussies aim to lift their game

BRISBANE, Aug 2: Tennis Australia President Geoff Pollard says his country's tennis players have become complacent and taken their compatriots' past glories for granted, reports AP.

qualified from Australia for the main draw at Wimbledon this year — but none was good enough to be seeded.

Pollard said the new plan, to be finalized in September, will set strategic goals in areas including participation, facilities, player performance, administration, coaching, officiating marketing and promotion.

In announcing the details of a multi-million dollar, five-year corporate plan for the sport, Pollard said on Friday that Australia has fallen behind many of its rivals.

The exact cost of adopting the plan still has to be finalized he said.

"Tennis in Australia has a proud history and a great future, but we need to be able to meet the challenges that are out there," Pollard said.

"We thought we had a production line and that success was something that would happen automatically," Pollard said.

PAT CASH was in the position of international prominence.

"We have one of the world's top four tournaments at the world's top venue," he said. "The depth is there among the players, but what we need is a real athlete, a Greg Norman, to get the flow on."

NHL star Zazel turns pro

TORONTO, Aug 3: National Hockey League center Peter Zazel of the Toronto Maple Leafs joined the ranks of the two-sport athletes when he signed with the Canadian Soccer League's North York Rockets, reports AP.

Zazel will remain under contract with the soccer team until Sept. 5, when NHL training camp opens. The financial terms of the CSL deal, signed Thursday, have not been worked out.

Zazel, a former Canadian national junior soccer team member, said Maple Leafs general manager Cliff Fletcher has no qualms about allowing him to play another sport.

"I talked to Mr Fletcher and he gave me the Ok," Zazel said. "He just told me not to get hurt. Hopefully I'll be able to keep up with the guys."

Zazel played for both the Ontario and national under-18 championship teams in 1982.

US, Italian cagers on collision course

EDMONTON, Canada, Aug 3: Current European champions Italy and twice world titleholders the United States appear to be on collision course for a showdown in Sunday's finals at the World Junior men's Basketball Championship, reports Reuter.

Judging on the form of the championship so far, the United States are expected to have little trouble eliminating Yugoslavia, while the Italians are firm favourites to eliminate Argentina.

The United States won the junior men's World Championship in 1979 and 1983, but were dethroned in the 1987 final by Yugoslavia. Italy has never won the World Championship.

The likely finalists coaches were full of praise Friday for the other team.

"The United States," said Italian coach Mario Blasoni, "has the best talent and they are very well coached. They have a big tradition."

"They have come from great schools, great colleges. This is the top basket ball country in the world. So they are the favourite team for this tournament."

Europe lures Argentine stars

BUENOS AIRES, Aug 3: Argentina's new football hero Gabriel Batistuta, top-scorer in the Copa America with his country last week, has become the latest to quit the country for rich pickings in Europe, reports AFP.

Argentina's 10th title in the South American championship has speeded the haemorrhage of talent. Even goalkeeper Sergio Goycochea, another national hero, agreed recently to join French Second Division side Brest, playing against largely part-time opponents.

indications of the way the economic crisis has hit Argentinian football.

Batistuta, the blonde haired 22-year-old striker with Argentinian championship finalists Boca Juniors, will move to Fiorentina in Italy at the end of next season.

Diego Maradona, now in disgrace over drug taking, was one of the first to move to Italy after establishing himself as one of the world's greatest players by leading Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup.

Of other current national players, Diego Simeone plays with Pisa and Claudio Caniggia is with Atalanta, both in the Italian championship.

SOCCER SCENARIO

Ban on Brest withdrawn



PARIS, Aug 3: The French football league on Friday allowed Brest, who were relegated to the Second Division and banned from making new signings because of huge debts, to take on Argentinian goalkeeper Sergio Goycochea, reports AFP.

The 1.1 million dollar fee for racing club of Argentina is coming from a local businessman who has kept Brest out of the bankruptcy court in recent months.

Other French clubs have complained about the transfer because they are owed money by Brest. Goycochea, one of the stars of the Copa America winning side, is one of many Argentinians to leave because of the economic crisis in their country.

Staunton joins Aston Villa

IRMINGHAM, Aug 3: Irish national defender Steve Staunton, transferred from Liverpool to Aston Villa on Friday for a fee of 1.1 million pounds (£1.7 million), reports AP.

Staunton, who signed a three-year contract, was the second player to leave 18-time English League champion Liverpool in 24 hours following the sale of Peter Beardsley to Everton for 1 million pounds (£1.6 million).

"I'm delighted that the signing has finally been completed," Staunton said. "Aston Villa are a big club and I hope that I can be just as successful with them as I was with Liverpool."

"Despite being only 22, Steve has a great pedigree," Atkinson said. "He has already won a host of top honors and I hope that he can achieve great things with Villa."

Rash of sendings off feared

IRMINGHAM, England, Aug 3: English soccer managers said on Friday that new FIFA rules for professional fouls could provoke a rash of sendings off in the coming season, reports Reuter.

FIFA introduced new rules last month requiring referees to send off a player who makes a deliberate handball to deny a scoring opportunity.

This could include a goalkeeper leaving his penalty area to handle the ball. Leeds manager Howard Wilkinson, chairman of the newly-formed Managers Association, criticised the rules after meeting league officials referees, managers and players.

"These new FIFA edicts will inevitably lead to more sendings off and it's probably that goalkeepers will suffer most."