

Azhar stars in Biman win

Sports Reporter

Biman's former national off-spinner Anwarul Amin Azhar piloted Bangladesh Biman to their third successive victory in the Navana Premier Division cricket league yesterday at the Dhaka Stadium.

The airtlines team defeated Kalabagan Kira Chhakra by 24 runs in a match that was reduced to a 36 overs a side contest because of inclement weather and a delayed start owing to overnight rain and heavy early morning mist.

The other Navana league fixture of the day, between reigning champions Brothers Union and Rupali Bank, fell through owing to unplayable conditions at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. That match will now be played today, following a bodily shift in the fixture, according to a BCCB press release.

Set in to bat, the Biman opening pair of Tariquzzaman Munir and Ahmed Iqbal Bachechu put on 33 runs before the former fell to a catch behind the wicket off Pappu for 10.

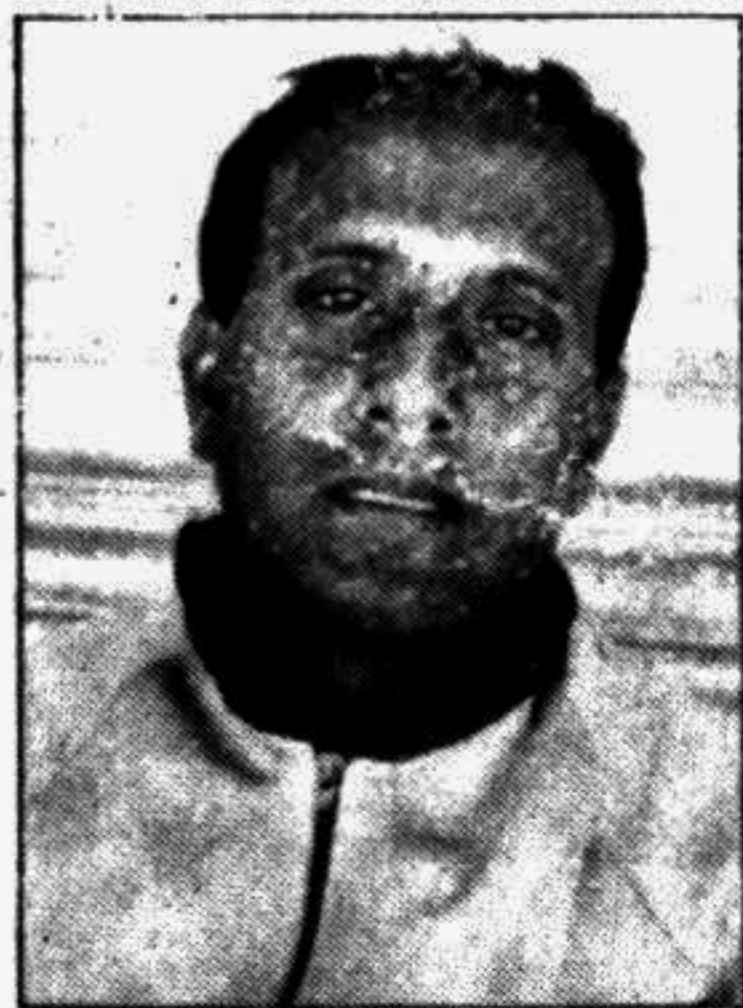
Salm Shahed, the graceful right-handed batsman who has recently been selected to play domestic cricket in South Africa, came at number three to play a composed knock of 47 with characteristic ease and elegance.

He sent the ball twice to the ropes in his 53 ball innings.

However, skipper Shahawaz Shanu set the tempo with a rapid-fire 50 off only 51 balls with his resourceful batting.

His delightful unbeaten knock contained three bound-

aries. Biman finally managed 167 for three from their 36 overs. Pappu was Kalabagan's most successful bowler finishing with figures of three for 42. Kalabagan's Indian recruit Gajanan Reddy bowled well but without luck to return with a



AZHAR... 5 for 27

depressing analysis of none for 21.

Kalabagan began their reply in a positive manner with opener Mohammed in particular playing some good shots.

But at 31, Dipu Roy Chowdhury, the veteran left handed all-rounder, promoted to open the innings, nicked one from off-spinner Azhar to wicket-keeper Dalim for 13.

Skipper Ishtiaque left ten runs later for a personal score of four.

After Shaon had left for 12 Biman paceman Ali Ahsan Babu struck two crucial blows to send Kalabagan reeling.

However, the last rites of annihilation were performed by off-spinner Azhar who went through the Kalabagan tail like hot knife through butter to

bundle Kalabagan out for 143. Azhar's tally of five wickets included the prize wicket of Reddy whom he bowled for five. Azhar, got back who among the wickets after a long time, was naturally the pick of the Biman bowlers with five for 27. Ali Ahsan Babu with two for 25 and Enamul Haq Moni with two for 22 supported him well.

SCOREBOARD

B. Biman

Munir c M Mamun b Pappu	10
Bachechu c Reddy b Pappu	28
Salm Shahed c (sub) b Pappu	47
Shanu not out	50
Zakaria not out	6
Extras	26
Total (for 3 wickets)	167

Bowling: O M R W

Reddy	7	1	22	0
Dipu Roy	7	0	21	0
Pappu	9	0	42	3
Shaon	9	1	41	0
Tanveer	1	0	10	0
James	3	0	24	0

Kalabagan KC

Mohammad c & b Ali Ahsan Babu	45
Dipu c Dalim b Azhar	13
Ishtiaque c Azhar b Moni	4
Shaon run out	12
Pilot b Ali Ahsan Babu	16
Reddy b Azhar	5
Tanveer st Dalim b Azhar	3
Pappu c & b Azhar	1
M Mamun st Dalim b Moni	0
James not out	0
Extras	24
Total (all out)	143

Bowling: O M R W

AA Babu	8	1	25	2
Pilal	3	0	19	0
Azhar	8	0	27	5
Bachechu	6	1	28	0
Moni	7.2	2	22	2
Salm Shahed	1	0	8	0

TODAY'S MATCH
Brothers Union vs Rupali Bank (Dhaka Stadium).

Ansars, BDR handballers win

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Ansars and Bangladesh Rifles won their respective matches in the third Federation Cup handball league yesterday at the Outer Stadium handball court.

In the first match of the day Ansars outplayed Surjodoy Boys Club by 14 goals to 11.

Jewel scored six goals and Rafique two for the winners while Tapu netted four for the losers.

In the highly contested other match of the day, favourites Rifles beat Brothers Union by a solitary goal.

The losers led the first half 6-4.

But Rifles, the reigning champions, pulled up their socks and pumped another eight goals as against Brothers' five in the second session to seal the fate of the match in their favour.

Mustafa and Jahangir scored six and two goals respectively for the winners while Hicai of Brothers played superbly, scoring eight goals.

TODAY'S MATCHES
B Police vs Air Force (2:15 pm)
BDR vs Ansars (3:30 pm)

US soccer squad's programme

CHICAGO, Dec 24: The US men's national soccer team announced on Monday its schedule for an international tournament, including a game against China in San Francisco and road matches against Spain, Ireland and Brazil, reports Reuter.

The international round-robin tournament, is scheduled for various northeastern US sites yet to be determined, said Bill Nuttal, national teams general manager for US soccer.

The first game on the schedule is on January 25 in Miami against a team from the Soviet Union, or its political successor, followed by a second US-Soviet match on February 2 in Michigan.

The US squad will visit central and South America February 9-22 for matches against Costa Rica and Brazil. Other matches will be announced, Nuttal said.

The other games set so far: March 11 against Spain, April 4—China, April 29—Ireland and mid-May against Scotland.

Jenei to be new Hungarian coach

BUCHAREST, Dec 24: Emerich Jenei, coach of Romania's 1990 World Cup side, will take over as trainer of Hungary's national team on January 16, reports Reuter.

Jenei, 54, signed a one-year contract which can be extended. Romanian Soccer Federation chairman Mircea Sandu said on Monday.

Jenei, who guided Steaua Bucharest to victory over Barcelona in the 1986 European Cup final, will replace Kalman Meszoly who failed to take Hungary into the European Championship finals.

Devoy stays top

LONDON, Dec 24: New Zealand's world champion Susan Devoy remained on top of the women's squash rankings with a victory in the recent Dutch Open, reports Xinhua.

The 28-year-old clinched the Dutch Open by overcoming England's Sue Wright who had beaten the Kiwi in the British Open last April.

That victory extended Devoy's lead over second placed Robyn Lambourne of Australia. Martine Le Moignan of England climbed three places into the third spot ahead of her guernsey colleague and long time rival Lisa Opie.

The biggest impact on the 1991 rankings has been made by two young English players, Sue Wright and Cassandra Jackman.

Wright jumped from 14th to 7th place while Jackman, the world junior champion, has soared 21 places to number 8.

Top 10 rankings:
1. Susan Devoy, New Zealand.
2. Robyn Lambourne, Australia.
3. Martine Le Moignan, England.
4. Lisa Opie, England.
5. Liz Irving, Australia.
6. Michelle Martin, Australia.
7. Susan Wright, England.
8. Cassandra Jackman, England.
9. Danielle Drady, Australia.
10. Heather Wallace, Canada.

Monaco suffer another setback

PARIS, Dec 24: Monaco's title chances took a severe knock when they lost 2-0 in Lyon on Wednesday, leaving French soccer league champions Marseille four points clear at the top, reports Reuter.



Pakistan's Banaras Khan (C) on the winners' podium with his gold medal after setting a new SAF Games record in the long jump by clearing 15.72 meters in Colombo on Dec 23. At right is silver medallist Md Nizamuddin and on left is bronze medallist Sattam Singh, both of India. —AFP photo

Openers' form worries India

MELBOURNE, Dec 24: India face a battle of endurance as much as skill over the festive season to stop a confident Australian team establishing a stranglehold on the sides' five-test series, reports Reuter.

The second Test starts on Thursday, followed on January 2 by the third in Sydney, giving India's struggling front-line batsmen little respite from Australia's impressive pace attack. Despite a declaration-assisted 39-run win over Queensland this week, the tourists' only first-class success of the tour, the memory of their first Test defeat by 10 wickets in Brisbane is still uncomfortably fresh.

Greg Ritchie, the former Australian Test batsman who hit a second innings century for Queensland, is in no doubt about the outcome.

"They are going to be thumped. They are an extremely weak side, nowhere near as strong as Indian teams of the past," Ritchie said.

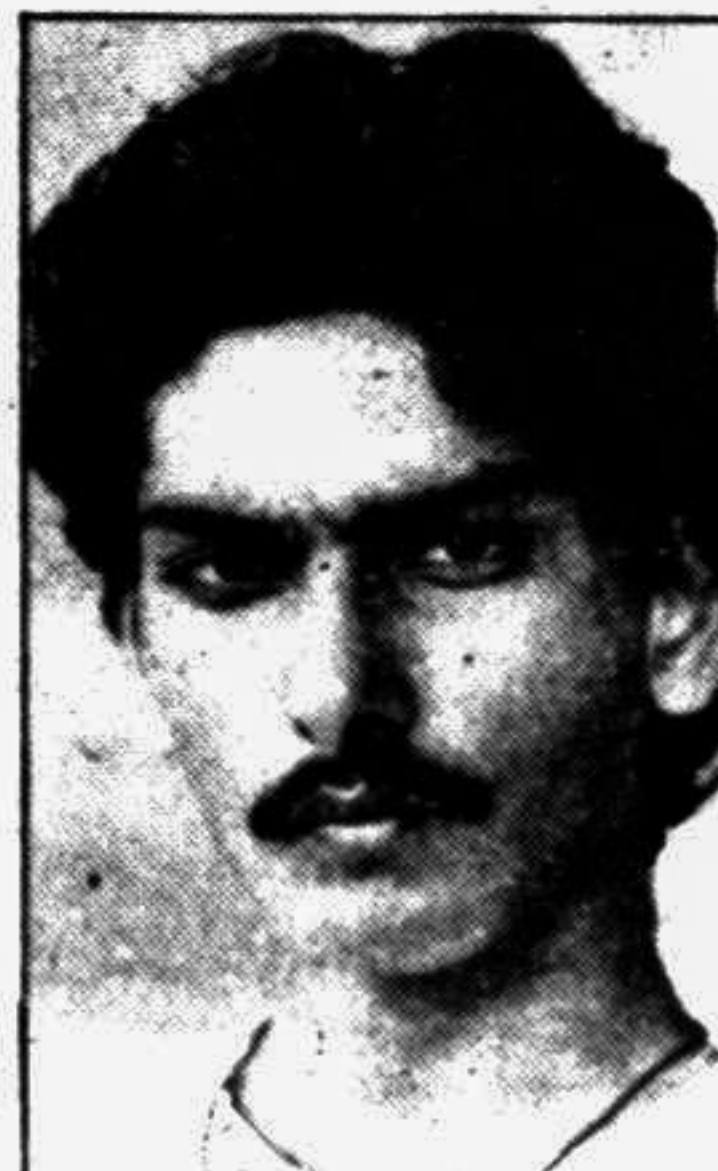
Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin admitted: "We played better against Queensland but our players have to be stronger in their minds. They let themselves

down when the pressure is on."

The Indians' main worry is at the top of the order where Krish Srikanth and Ravi Shastri continue to struggle.

are likely to face an even stronger Australian side than the one which dealt with them in four days at the Gabba.

Not many people react with delight to being told they are



RAVI SHASTRI

There has at least been a slight improvement further down, with Sanjay Manjrekar, Azharuddin and Dilip Vengsarkar all recording big scores against some admittedly modest Queensland bowling.



KRISH SRIKANTH

to spend Christmas 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from home but West Australian Bruce Reid was an exception this week.

Reid has proved his form and fitness and is expected to play at Melbourne, replacing another left-armed Mike

Whitney.

His state colleague Geoff Marsh will also play, having recovered from a neck injury caused by teammate Dean Jones in Sydney last week when both went for the same catch.

Australia, though, have not beaten India in Melbourne for 24 years. Current coach Bobby Simpson was captain at the time, and India have since won twice at the MCC.

But the Grand Stadium has seen many changes since their last victory 10 years ago, and the differences may well be mirrored on the pitch where India might well be satisfied with a draw.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from)—Allan Border (captain), Geoff Marsh, Mrk Taylor, David Boon, Dean Jones, Mark Waugh, Ian Healy, Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes, Peter Taylor, Bruce Reid, Mike Whitney.

INDIA (from)— Mohammad Azharuddin (captain), Ravi Shastri, Krish Srikanth, Sanjay Manjrekar, Dilip Vengsarkar, Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev, Manoj Prabhakar, Kiran More, Venkatapathy Raju, Jagajal Srinath, Praveen Amre, Narendra Hirwani, Chandrakant Pandit, Saurav Ganguly, Subroto Banerjee,

Weather ruins Gujranwala Test

GUJRANWALA, Pakistan, Dec 24: Bad light and a soggy outfield robbed Sri Lanka and Pakistan of yet another day's play today in their ill fated second Test but Pakistan captain Imran Khan defended the choice of venue, reports Reuter.

The players have been idle since Friday, when only 36 overs were possible on the first day of the first ever Test played at the Municipal Stadium in the Punjab province town of Gujranwala.

Since then showers and drizzle have rendered parts of the outfield too soggy for play on the rare occasions when fog, mist and cloud cover have lifted.

But Imran, asked if he thought organisers had been wrong to select the venue, said: "I think it is the best thing to give Gujranwala Test status."

"Unlike the main cricket centres, Karachi and Lahore, where the crowd response is dwindling, there has been a tremendous crowd response here."

He added: "The pitch prepared here is probably the best in Pakistan at the moment. The ball bounces here at other centres pitches are overplayed and the bounce has diminished completely."

Both sides like the pitch. "It was very, very good," Sri Lankan tour manager Ranjith Fernando said.

The problem lies in the outfield and some patches around the square. These were damaged by heavy machinery brought in to prepare a platform for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to address a rally at the ground last October.

Loose earth, lavishly sprinkled to repair the ground, has swiftly turned to mud and emergency treatment with jute bags and sawdust has so far failed to dry out the trouble spots.

Imran ventured gentle criticism of local politicians, saying: "Had the rally not been held here, the ground would not have been damaged."

He also lamented the loss of preparation for the World Cup. "Sadly this series so far has not been much help to the players.

The month of December is probably not the best time for cricket (in the area)."

Imran supported a suggestion from Pakistan team manager Intikhab Alam for extending December Test matches in Pakistan to six days to enable 30 hours of play between bad weather.

Pakistan made 109 for two in their first innings at Gujranwala, losing the wickets of opener Shoaib Mohammad for one and Zahid Fazla for 21. Opener Rameez Raja has been not out for three days on 51 with Javed Miandad on 20.

The Sri Lankans have got a goodish batting line-up but they lack international exposure. Imran said. "Their bowling lacks penetration — they don't have genuine fast bowlers. Though they have good medium pacers, they lack an outstanding spinner."

The first of the three Test series at Sialkot was also hit by bad light and was drawn.

But Fernando was also loath to criticise the current venue: "I don't think anyone could be blamed," he said. "One cannot fight nature."

IOC in dilemma over Soviet breakup

GENEVA, Dec 24: The former Soviet Union may still be represented by one team in the Summer Olympics even though its republics have formed a new Commonwealth of Independent States, the director general of the International Olympic Committee said Monday, reports AP.

Francis Carrard said the team to find "the best possible way" for the athletes following the official demise of the Soviet Union over the weekend. International soccer officials are taking a similar approach.

"We're following very closely the developments," Carrard told a reporter in a telephone interview from Lausanne, Switzerland, headquarters of the IOC. "It came as no surprise to me. I was in the Soviet Union three weeks ago."

Carrard said he had met with the sports ministers or their representatives from the different republics and that they agreed that the Olympic competitors should come first.

"All were wisely aware" of the need to work together, despite difficulties, he said.

Carrard said there was a need to have one single team representing the 12 republics.

The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which earlier this year gained their independence from the Soviet Union, already have decided to send their own teams to the Winter Olympics in Albertville, France, and the Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain.

Earlier this month, Vitaly Smirnov, chief of the Soviet Olympic Committee, expressed confidence that Soviet athletes would compete as planned in both the summer and winter games.

The 12 republics agreed in

November to send a joint team to both the winter and summer games in 1992. Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the IOC, said the team would march under the hammer-and-sickle flag and that the Soviet national anthem would be played at Albertville. It was not known whether this would change because of the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Carrard said Monday that such details about the games in Barcelona will be worked out at a meeting between the IOC and officials of the 12 republics on March 9.

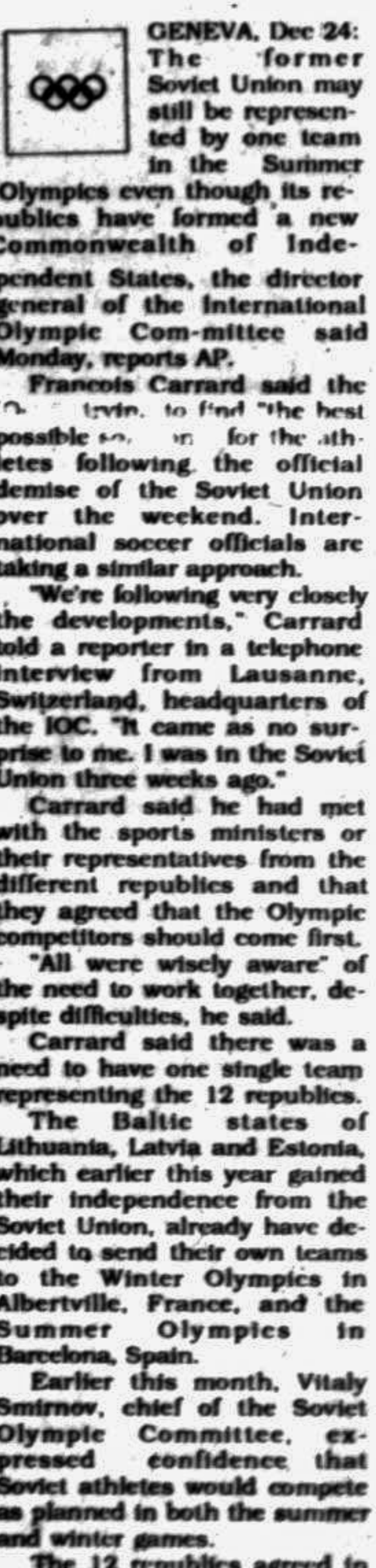
The flag, team name and national anthem could be changed even if the athletics remain as a unit, Carrard said.

Some of the republics have proposed using the Olympic flag and anthem at Barcelona.

Guido Tonagni, spokesman for the International Federation of Association Football,

at a meeting between the IOC and officials of the 12 republics on March 9.

action on yesterday's Federation Cup handball meet match between Surjodoy Boys and Bangladesh Ansars at the Outer Stadium. —Star photo



Chinese chess prodigy ends Russian reign

By S. MUTHIAH

Russian chess is coming under increasing pressure as young prodigies are being discovered in other parts of the world. One such prodigy, assiduously trained after her talent was discovered in childhood, has just ended Russia's 40-year reign over women's chess.

Baby-faced Xie Jun, who at 21 has shed her pigtails for

however, she fell seriously ill. The doctors diagnosed exhaustion. She said: "I had taxed my brain and strength too much."

After recovery she slowly began practising again. The enforced rest had done her form good. And Chiburdanidze was surprised by her skill, never really looking like win-

has instilled in her a sound sense of the basics, her attacking flair is all her own and the powerful middle game is the contribution of hours of Xiangqi.

What has also helped is the Chinese system in which its women chess champions practice and train together with its world-rated men, the two playing against each other almost daily.

The result of training and flair has been that she was named one of China's top ten national sportspersons in 1990. This year, she joins the growing list of Chinese world champions, underlining the fact that China has successfully developed a system for turning out potential world champions in all sports.

Xie is not the first of these champions. But she is the first who has upset the dominance of one sport by one country. That makes her something different from the table-tennis, and volley ball players, the athletes and divers of China.

GEMINI



XIE JUN...new queen

short hair, has given the sleeping giant of sport, China, yet another world championship.

She beat 31-year-old Maya Chiburdanidze comfortably, 8.5 — 6.5, in Manila, winning in the 15th game of their 16-game series. She had four outright wins to two by Chiburdanidze, with nine games being drawn.

With that win, the women's world chess championship has moved away from the former Soviet Union for the first time

since Rudenko won it in 1951. Rudenko won the title by beating Vera Minchik, a Russian-born British player, who had held the title from its inception in 1927. The title, fought for every three years, has stayed in Russia since Rudenko's victory, though it has changed hands several times within those borders.

For the first time in decades the Russian challenge was snuffed out when Xie, who had started poorly after arriving late and tired, finished first and Alisa Marick of Yugoslavia finished second in that round.

Then, according to the rules, they had to face each other in an eight-match play-off. Last February Xie made sure she earned the title Candidate by playing brilliant chess throughout this series. She won 4.5-2.5.

On returning to Beijing, Though the formal training

Chiburdanidze won the title in 1978, when she was just 17. She was the youngest woman to win the championship. Xie Jun became the third Chinese woman to make the candidates round since China made its mark in 1983. She had got through in 1990 candidates round, the zonals last March, the inter-zonals in July and the eight-woman round in October.

A spotter from Beijing discovered her, and persuaded her to move to Beijing and switch to international chess. By then, Xie had honed her middle-game, a skill emphasised by the constant practice Xiangqi calls for. Now began the formal training at the Beijing Institute of Board Games that was to mould a child prodigy into a top international player.

Though the formal training



MAYA CHIBURDANIDZE