and trainees. But the single

most important means of sus-

taining this programme and

obtaining any tangible result is

1991 tennis nationals—a review

After & lapse of nearly 27 months the national tennis championships were held at the National Tennis Complex. Ramna between 9-14 March. 1991. The setting was all too familiar the lush greenery of the Ramna Park proudly displaying the vibrant colours of spring; the sultry winds blowing gently, rhythmically across the courts; the ritualistic assembly of a heterogeneous mixture of competitors. nay gladiators: the oppressive heat draining those assembled of all energy even before the commencement of the fray; and finally, the ceremontal inauguration of the championships itself on the morning of the 9th. The ingredients were all there to make it a tournament to remember.

THE SEEDINGS

The seedings for all past national championships have traditionally been based on the performances of individuals in the preceding year's championships. This year witnessed a deviation from that norm. The seedings were based, but perhaps justly, on results of the last few tournaments, totally ignoring the results of the national championships of 1989 which was staged strangely enough, in the last week of 1988. Perhaps the only person to have suffered on account of the seedings was Sardar lftekhar who had figured in seven of the last eight finals going into this tournament. His absence from the tennis scene for 26 months on self-imposed extle deprived him of a high seeding. Thus the final seedings for the men's singles event this were follows : Shovon Jamaly, Hiralal, Maroof Rahman, Shibulal, Byzid Rashid, Sami Razzak, Sardar Iftekhar and Titun Rahman. The draw set up the scene for some memorable and entertaining matches.

On the ladies' singles side, Mehrin Asaf and Rina were seeded one and two respectively. However, many were intrigued to fine our finest junior prospect and the top seed Mehrin being pitted against one Ms Goodyear in the very first round. It was a fixture that defied logic. Had the organisers bothered to use the Tennis Complex telephone (it is generally abused!) to phone the American Club (that venerable institution of women's tennis in Bangladesh which has provided its fair share of past ladies' champions) they would have been hard pressed to omit Ms Goodyear from the seedings as she happens to be

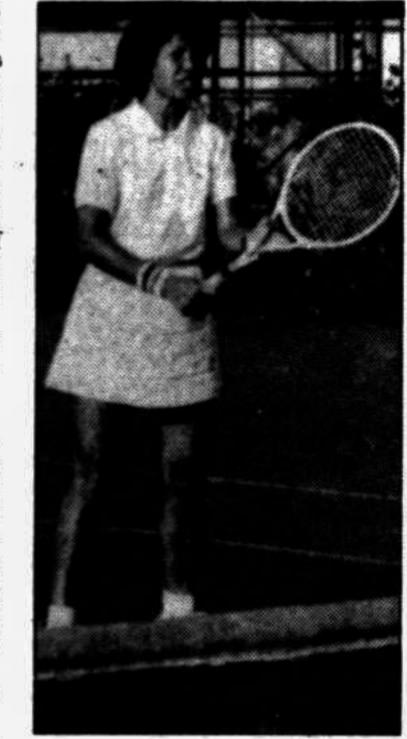
their best player But regardless of the winds of change sweeping the country the ordanisers live up to their past reputation of conjuring up such blatant gaffes and contributed directly to the untimely demise of the top seed in a gruelling encounter.

THE TOURNAMENT

There were some en-

thralling matches in the early rounds, especially in the men's singles event. Most notable among the second round matches were those featuring Shovon against Rumon and Hiralal against the ever-improving Faisal. Faisal and Rumon are currently two of the leading juniors in the country, behind Shibulal and Dilip Passia. Those encounters provided for some wonderful tennis and although the victories of Shovon and Hira were never in doubt, both Faisal and Rumon entertained the holiday crowd with some refreshing brand of attacking tennis.

The match most people came to see on quarter-final day of the men's singles was that between Hiralal and



MS. GOODYEAR... ..double crowns

Sardar Iftekhar, Hiralal, the perennial runner-up to Shovon these past two years, had the edge. He was younger, fitter, hungrier and perhaps fatally a little cockier than Sardar who

had been at best a dark horse going into the tournament.

Sardar's whiplash forehand was now a much more conservative weapon than it had previously been and gone perhaps irrevocably was his on-court trade mark fire-works. This was altogether a different, subtler, more mellowed Iftekhar. Playing short, angled shorts to all corners of the court and taking the pace off the ball, he subdued a shellshocked Hira 6-2, 6-2.

The quarter-final match featuring Shovon vs Titun was an appealing one. Perhaps Titun, too, suffered from the seedings, as he was definitely a better player than some of the higher seeds. Although the outcome was all to predictable, Titun delighted the crowds with some forceful groundstrokes off both flanks.

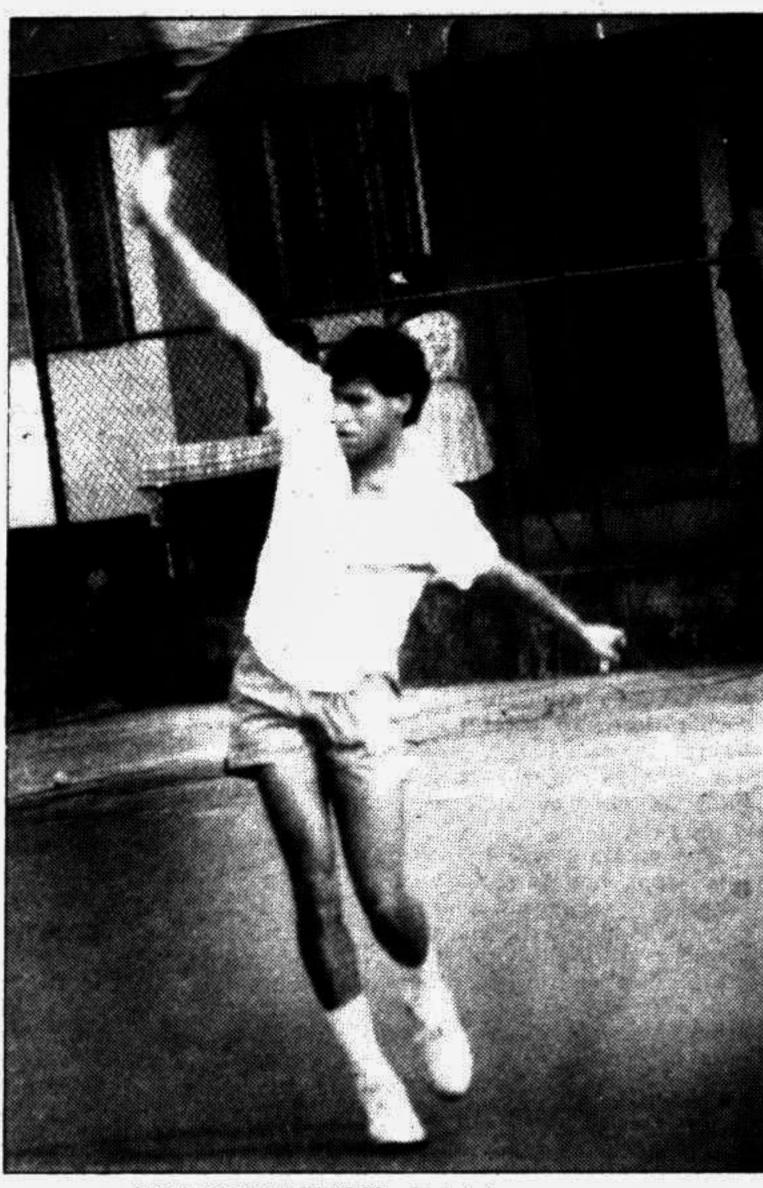
The first semifinal saw topseed Shovon prevailing over national junior champion Shibulal in what can at best be termed a mismatch. Shovon's raw power overwhelmed his opponent time and again. Shibu had no answer to Shovon's thunderous serves. His own serves also left a lot to be desired. It is difficult to visualise his progressing to the next stage unless he manages to bring about a radical improvement in this area. The second semifinal saw

Sardar facing an in-form Maroof. It was a repeat of the first even semifinal staged on these courts ten years ago. It was an uneventful encounter in the first set with Sardar prevailing 6-4. The second set provided more drama. Sardar, displaying all his skills and courteraft, raced to a 5-0 lead only to see this apparently insurmountable lead whittled away as Maroof clawed back to 5-5. The set was eventually won by Iftekhar 7-6 in the tiebreaker, but not before Maroof had valiantly saved three match points.

The final was an epic. For nearly three hours Shovon and Sardar toiled under a blistering sun. It was a showdown in which the entire range of strokes were on display. Shovon's lightning serves and powerful back-hands provided the perfect foil to Iftekhar's deft volleys and amazing anticipation at the net. Twice iftekhar served for the match and twice he was denied by Bangladesh's current boy won-

der. In the end the latigue of the gruelling encounters of the previous two rounds seemed to have caught up with Iftekhar who finally succumbed 4-6, 6-2, 11-9. It was a triumph of logic over chance, of reality over romance, of doggedness over guile. Incidentally, it was the longest three-setter final ever recorded in Bangladesh

By Sonam But enough about the tournament itself. Let us now focus on those areas of tennis where there has to be a perceptible improvement before we can even dream of progressing to the next stage. Areas such as the organisation and management of tennis. It is of course, refreshing to see the changes brought about in the BTF in



SHOVON JAMALY....lightning serves

Maradona, Leonard taking cocaine

tennis and reconfirmed Shovon's firm hold over the top spot in men's tennis. In the men's doubles final, Iftekhar and Shovon predictably beat Hira and Byzid in straight sets.

In a dull and drab encounter in which spectators struggled to stay awake Ms Goodyear beat Rina in straight sets and teaming up with Yanie, beat Mehrin Asaf and Sathi Sarkar in the ladies' doubles final.

recent months. This was long overdue, to say the least. Now that the Federation is out of the grasp of a coterie of selfish, cynical and blatantly autocratic officials, the time is right to restructure our efforts towards development of the game in every facet before all is lost. The caretaker team now in change has the rare opportunity to work on two particular areas that are bound to pay rich dividends, should they be pursued to a fruitful

conclusion, that is (I) training and (II) sponsorship.

TRAINING

The BTF's approach to training has at best been a lacklustre effort in the past. Initiatives in this area have been confined to organising occasional 2-3 days' training sessions, courtesy of ITF coaches from abroad and providing a professional coach for the national Davis Cup squad on a couple of occasions. But training means much more than that. It is primarily through training that we discover the latent talent in a budding player and pave the way for the fulfillment of potential. It is indeed alarming that inspite of having a mammoth facility, by local standards at least we are not producing quality players of mentionable numbers in the absence of a coherent, well-defined training programme. Something has to be done before we slip irrevocably into the quagmire of incompetence and inconsequence.

nice to appoint a panel of professional coaches and engage them on a round-the-year basis. The emphasis must be on the word "Professional", to get maximum commitment, dedication and results from the coaches. Target groups should be set up and a separate coach should be assigned to each group. It is a must to have a men's A and B teams. Each team should comprise no more than between 4-6 players. A similar structure is necessary for three different age categories in the junior divisions, namely, the under-18, under-16 and under-14 age groups. On the ladies' side, we can

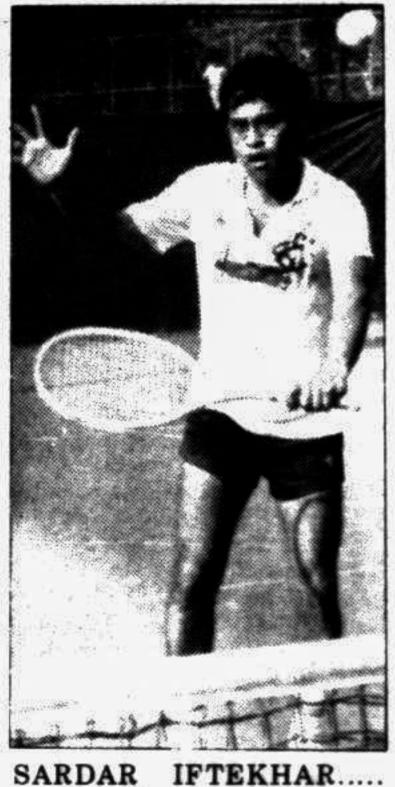
As a first step, it would be

afford to begin more modestly by having a single national squad, initially comprising between 4-6 players. Training session should encompass the three elements of the game, i. e. stroke development drills, general physical and mental fitness and the theoretical aspects. So far we have almost always confined training stints to on-court drills without really providing insight into the subtler elements of the game. This has definitely given rise to certain deficiencies with regard to proper shot selection and mental toughness of

our budding juniors. Coming back to the ques-

coaches on a full time basis. it is easy to dismiss this proposal on the grounds of expenses likely to be involved. But one did not necessarily have foreign ITF coaches in mind, who would have to be paid in foreign currency. Why don't the BTF tap the local talent available? There are enough committed lovers of the game who, properly approached, would be only too willing to take on this responsibility. The likes of Sandru Salam' Khaled Salahuddin, Haroon Rashid and Maroof Rahman readily come to mind. These players, between them, have a rich pool of know-how and experience. A plus point is that they also speak the lingo, unlike some of the European coaches who have visited us from time to time. Thus these coaches would be able to communicate better with their charges and avoid a situation similar to that faced by 'Kaiser' Beckenbauer when he tried to take on the coach's job at French-speaking Olympique Marsailles! Finally, the BTF should give the coaches freedom and logistical

tion of appointing professional



.mellowed

support in order to see their efforts bearing fruit.

SPONSORSHIP It is all very well to have a

training programme, trainers

sponsorship. It strange that in spite of the BTF being made up of people who literally made up the "Who's Who" of Bangladesh, the ranked players don't have any sponsor, let alone the juniors! It is inconceivable that they have to compete at the highest levels of the game on their own steam. Any patronage received has been courtesy of the National Sports Council and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Had they not been kind enough to provide finances for exposure of our players on foreign soil time and again it is doubtful if the BTF would have bothered to organise this key opportunity for development. The ability was certainly there but the effort was sadly lacking. Our boys and girls have to worry about the very basics, e., g., strings, balls, rackets and even shoes; so we can forget about exposure to international tournaments at home and abroad. It is really not clear how the BTF visualises developing local talent without providing such basics. How can a promising junior coming from a middle class or poor familybe expected to afford all these. on his or her own without any subsidy from the BTF defies

Perhaps the BTF is content with providing the court facilities at a very reasonable monthly subscription. But this is certainly not enough. To take a case in point, it is really shameful that even the national squad is yet to be provided with a sponsor. But such is the stuff of which the BTF is made.

The only redeeming feature is that inspite of such inadequate care and attention by the authorities the boys and girls continue to turn up in large. numbers. There are new leaves sprouting, new buds on the verge of blooming. This is another day. Sensible, sane people are at the helm of affairs. The BTF should now provide basics like strings, rackets, stringing facilities, balls, shoes and other necessary equipment to the national men's. junior and ladies' squads. They should arrange to provide long terms sponsors for the promising ones as well as the established stars of the game to further hone their skills. These basic equipment should also be available to aspiring players at subsidised rates. The only other alternative is to embrace obscurity and medi-

Lillehammer not to cut costs

OSLO, Apr 4: Organisers of the 1994 Lillehammer Winner Olympics on Tuesday recommended Norway abandon a cost-cutting scheme to stage the bobsleigh and luge events in Albertvile, France, site of the 1992 Games, reports

"It is recommended that . . . the preparations for the Winter Games in 1994 continue as originally planned," a statement from the board of the organising committee said.

Organisers also said the International Olympic Committee had sent a letter saying it would not accept changes in the siting of the 1994 Games.

Lillehammer sources indicated Albertville wanted more money than expected to hold the events - reducing any savings for Norway.

Last month, Lillehammer suspended construction of a 200 million erown 130 million dollars) track to consider a suggestion from Albertville that the French stage the 1994 bobsleigh and luge.

Such a move would have contradicted Norway's longstanding aim of staging a compact Games but would have helped cut the total Lillehammer budget of seven billion crowns (1.05 billion dollars)

A final decision to be taken at a meeting on Thursday is expected to endorse Tuesday's recommendation. The meeting will be attended in addition by representatives of the country's parliament and Norwegian companies.

Albertville's bobsleigh track, at the La Plagne resort, has been heavily criticised by environmentalists for using large amounts of toxic ammonia to freeze the tee.

Lillehammer organisers say the Norwegian track would also use ammonta as a coolant. but seal it securely in concrete.

Philippe Chatrier, President of the International Tennis Federation(ITF), said on Tuesday procedures had still to be decided but rounds and all could be tested from the quarter-finals onwards.

A small number of random tests were made at the French Open for the first time last

Chatrier said dope testing

had still not been widely enough accepted in tennis with players arguing that it was an infringement of their pri-

"But if foreign players refuse the tests, they will not be able to play in the French Open in the future," he added.

Chatrier, who also heads the French Tennis Federation, said the decision on increased testing followed talks with 1983 French Open champion

Anti-drugs champaigner Noah said he had urged more testing because of growing doubts about the purity of the sport. Either we talk about doping or we don't, he said. But if we do, we have to say that it exists.

Let's stop burying our heads in the sand. The difference between us and athletics is that there is so much cash at stake that no one is interested in catching the guys. There is a sort of protection and some are taking advantage of the

lack of controls. The tournament starts on

Chapman tops the ecoring chart the scoring chart

LONDON, Apr 4: Lec Chapman climbed to the top of the English First Division's goalscoring chart with two goals in leeds 5-0 rout of Sunderland on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Chapman started and finished the scoring in the fifth and 86th minutes, taking his tally for the season to 23, as Leeds thoroughly outclassed -threatened relegation Sunderlands.

Welsh international Gary Speed also scored twice - in the 35th and 59th minutes. Carl Shutt was Leeds' other

Brian McClair's 88th minute goal for Manchester United condemned Wimbledon to their first defeat in 11 games.

United won 2-1 after trail-

ing to a 15th minute goal by

Andy Clark, playing his first full game for Wimbledon, Clark scored against Nottingham Forest on Saturday after coming on as a substitute.

Psychologist blames it on stress to deal with stress is a skill

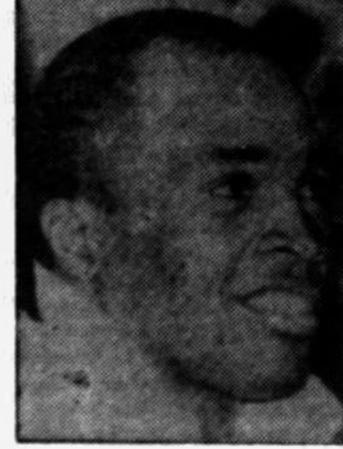
LONDON, Apr 4: A modern morality play featuring the extravagant sporting talents of Diego Maradona and Sugar Ray Leonard reached a sombre conclusion over the Easter weekend, reports Reuter.

A routine drugs test on Maradona showed traces of cocaine, almost certainly ending the career of a soccer player who at his peak was the greatest exponent of the world's

most popular sport. And Leonard, as gifted a boxer as any in the checkered history of the ring, confirmed he had been a cocaine user with additional revelations of alcohol abuse and wife beating.

Significantly, cocaine, the glamour drug of the excessive 1980s, was the stimulant involved in each case.

During the past decade. both men scaled the heights of two sports which can yield unimaginable riches to the



SUGAR RAY LOENARD

chosen few and both were an integral part of an era in which the pursuit of wealth was almost a moral obligation. British sports psychologist

John Syer, formerly associated with Tottenham soccer club and now working with the British Olympic cycling team, believes stress could be the key to the emotional problems of famous sports people.

"You can never generalise". Syer said in a telephone interview. "But there's the pressures of being in the public eye, of having to deal with the

"It comes down to an ability to deal with stress. The ability

that sports people do need."

"There's all the attention of the media, how they appear to other people. They become more concerned with what's going on around them than with their sport".

Maradona's rise was dizzying. From a Buenos Aires slum he graduated to the captaincy of his country and became the world's most sought-after player, hawking his expensive talents first in Spain and then

The 1986 World Cup in Mexico provided the perfect platform for his outrageous talent, based on consummate technique on the ball and an instinct for the game which continued to make his consistently dangerous even when, in recent seasons, time and a succession of injuries slowed him to a walk.

In Mexico, Maradona played sublime football, frustrating opponents with dazzling individual runs and splitting defences wide open with passes of supreme vision.

Argentina went on to take the World Cup, although Maradona's overall performance will always be flawed by the infamous "hand of God. incident when he punched home a goal against England.

Players as prominent and dangerous as Maradona inevitably attract the attention of ruthless, cynical defenders and the little Argentine suffered badly in the 1982 World Cup in Spain. By the 1990 Cup, he, him-

self, was tainted by cynicism. flinging himself to the turf at every opportunity in theatrical attempts to win penalties. He still, however, managed to steer an indifferent

Argentine side to the final in his last fling on the world In the past year his life has disintegrated. Police are investigating alleged links with a Naples vice ring, he is involved in a paternity suit and his club

Leonard had gifts of speed, technical excellence and intelligence granted to few. tle outboxed some of the most daunting opponents of

their image.

the age in Thomas Hearns, Roberto Duran and Marvin

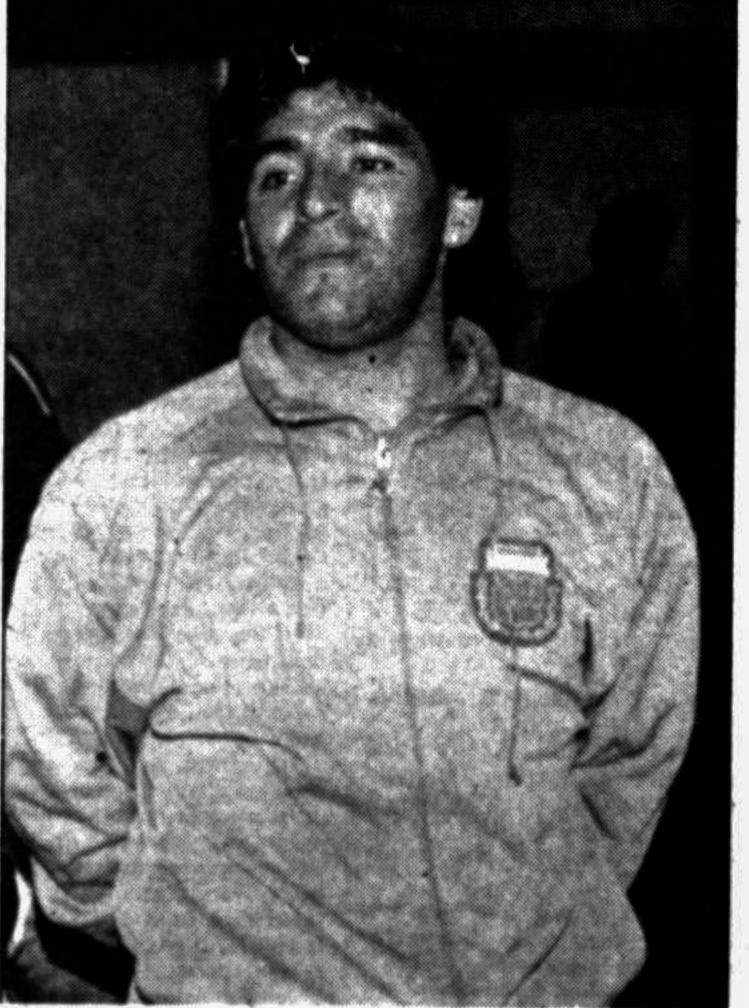
Hagler in a variety of divisions. A millionaire early in his ca reer, he did not need to fight after doctors diagnosed an eye

The American quit but found, as so many fighters before him, that retirement created a frightening void without the craft that gave his life meaning.

Leonard has testified that he used cocaine for three years to try to forget the emptiness he felt. He also drank, leading dleweight championship of the

In later years Leonard fought opponents of increasingly dubious credentials, trying and failing to win the public affection accorded to one of his idols, the incomparable Muhammad Ali.

Maradona has fled home to Argentina, leaving behind a confusing statement claiming he is the victim of an "obscure plan." Leonard continues to search for something to replace the craft he practised



DIEGO MARADONA

to irrational behaviour and wife

"I was not proud of those Napoli are suing for damaging three years," he said.

> When he finally returned to boxing he demolished the fearsome Hagler in a text book demonstration of the sweet science to take the mid-

with incomparable skill.

Syer sees parallels with the business world, with its relentless pressure to succeed.

"In a business setting stress can lead to burn-out. The ability to deal with pressure is a skill that an athlete needs to develop."

SOCCER ALL YEAR

By Sergei Popov

mance.

Years ago Soviet soccer players used to have vacations in winter. Now they are in ac-

tion all year round. The Soviet national squad coached by Anatoly Byshovets are now preparing for a European Cup selection match against Hungary, which is scheduled for April 17. They beat Scotland in Glasgow 1-0. netting the goal in the last minute. Byshovets stuck with the men who were at hand. Practically no serious workouts

were held The USSR Soccer Federation did not hold back and paid \$20,000 for a telecast of the match. There were snowfalls and good frosts in Moscow and many other Soviet cities on that day. But, when they watched the players running on the green pitch, Soviet TV fans were reminded of the

summer. Several years ago another leading Soviet coach, Eduard Malofeyev, invented the term "sincere soccer". But then it was ridiculed and buried in oblivion.

In Glasgow the Soviets displayed the "sincere soccer" Malofeyev had been referring to. They had no intention of using defensive tactics and launched steady attacks on the opponents' goal. It was fair

One should not overestimate the significance of this first victory, as some Moscow sports periodicals have hastily done. Soon after

the USSR team's flasco at the World Cup in Italy. Byshovets said that a national coach should count not simply on "stars" but on true sportsmen.

Why did such celebrities as Protasov, Litovchenko, Yuri Savichev, and Mikhailichenko not play in Glasgow? Byshovets explained the situation unequivocally: "Protasov, Litovehenko, and Savichev are playing for Olympiakos of Greece and scoring a lot of goals. That's not surprising. however. Greece isn't such a great force in soccer as, say, Italy or Argentina. So far don't have sufficient information on their form.

We'll also try to see our former leading players in action for a couple of games. Then we'll take the final decision. But honestly. I'm quite satisfied with the youngsters' perfor-

The youngsters - Sergei Yuran, Andrei Kanchelskis, Igor Kolyvanov, and Dmitry Kuznetsov — are really living up to Byshovets's expectations. Not long ago Soviet sports

quarters regretted that many stars had left for Western European professional clubs. But their departure led to the emergence of fresh talent. Former national coach

Valery Lobanovsky used to reproach Sergei Aleinikov and other newly-baked pros with "being slack on thier fleet" during the World Cup in Italy. The players were severely shaken and hurt.

Unlike Lobanovsky, Byshovets is not prejudiced against footballers playing abroad. Mikhailichenko was not invited to Glasgow because a few days later he had to play for his club Sampdoria in the Italy Cup quarterfinals. "I didn't want to trouble Alexet for a friendly", said Byshovets, "But we need him and count on him." Igor Dobrovolsky signed a

contract with Genoa of Italy and is to make his debut for the club in July. Byshovets, who coached Dobrovolsky in Moscow Dynamo and the Olympic squad, kept him under his wing. But Genoa suddenly reported that, in keeping with the contract, they were sending Igor to Castellon of Spain for probation. However, Dobrovolsky got

several days' leave, captained the Soviet side in Glasgow, and was named the best Soviet player in the match. Aleinikov and Sergei Gorlukovich also arrived from their clubs to uphold their national colours. Oleg Kuznetsov, however, was absent because of injury.

All these players will most likely be included in the selection game against Hungary. And to them Andrei Chernyshov, Ivan Getsko, Nikolai Savichev, Akhrik Tsvetba, and Anatoly Mokh. In short, the rejuvenated Soviet national seems quite promising.

Goalie Alexander Uvarov can also consider himself a veteran. But it was only after Rinat Dasayev's departure that he really displayed his skills.

The decider in the selec-

tion group will be against Hungary on September 25 and against Italy on October 12 (IAN)