

Seles, Sabatini, Sanchez in semis

MANHATTAN BEACH, Calif., Aug 17: Gabriela Sabatini, benefiting from a host of unforced errors, rallied from a 1-5 deficit in the third set to defeat Lori McNeil 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 Friday in the quarterfinals of the Virginia Slims of Los Angeles, reports AP.

Sabatini, the second seed, played a streaky and uneven match, but McNeil, seeded No. 8, wasted two match points as she fell apart in the third set.

McNeil's first match point came at 5-1 in the third set on Sabatini's serve, but McNeil hit a backhand volley wide. Sabatini followed with a forehand winner and held serve when McNeil hit a backhand into the net.

McNeil had another chance

to win at 5-4 but double-faulted on match point and lost the game on two unforced errors. Two games later, Sabatini won the match at love as McNeil double-faulted twice.

McNeil had eight double-faults in the match, six in the final set.

"I didn't do anything special," Sabatini said. "She didn't want the match. I probably didn't win the match. I thought I was going to lose it."

McNeil agreed that she let the match slip away.

"If I had been a lot more aggressive, I would have won," she said. "I gave her the opportunity to get to the net when she was down. At 5-4, I kind of rushed things a bit."

Sabatini advanced to meet Japan's Kimiko Date in Saturday's semifinals.

In other quarterfinal matches, third-seeded Arantxa

Sanchez Vicario regrouped after dropping the first set and beat Helena Sukova of Czechoslovakia 4-6, 6-4, 6-0. Date advanced by beating Jo Durie of Great Britain 6-4, 6-1.

Top-seeded Monica Seles played woman player, lost only three points on her serve in the first set and won 13 of the last 16 points.

In the second, she took a 5-1 lead while losing only three of 23 points. Paz fought off a match point in the seventh game and held serve, only to have Seles serve out the match.

"I was feeling better about going to the net tonight," Seles said. "I'm working on that. My net game is a lot better than a month ago."

Paz said Seles was too much for her.

"I started to play well but I

was too anxious to win," she said. "She got into her rhythm. With Monica, you don't get any opportunities, she is so fast."

Sanchez Vicario, who will face Seles on Saturday, overcame stomach problems to defeat Sukova.

After losing the first set, Sanchez Vicario began to take charge, using passing shots down the line to move the slower Sukova around the court.

At the changeover following the third game, the Spaniard left the court and vomited.

"She (Sukova) was playing well in that first set and not missing many shots," she said. "I started playing more aggressive. I knew it would be a tough match. I waited to pass her and I also started serve-and-volleying more. If won the second set I knew I'd win the match."

It's a black Friday for US



HAVANA, Aug 17: A 16-year-old Cuban student helped make it black Friday for the United States in the Pan-American Games here when he snatched

gold — were disqualified in the heats when anchorman Don Utley took off 3/1000 early in the final exchange with John Miranda.

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to enter a university, said he had been swimming more than three hours a day for months in preparation for the race.

He was lying third until the turn at 150 metres when he came off the wall faster than the United States' Tyler Mayfield and started a sensational last length.



Cuba's Mario Gonzalez exults after winning men's 200-metre breaststroke final in the Pan-American Games on August 16. Gonzalez won with a new Pan-American record of 2:15.50.

victory with the closing strokes of the men's 200-metre breaststroke, reports AP.

With a frantic crowd urging him on, Mario Gonzalez overhauled Nelson Diebel of the United States in the last 15 metres to clock 2m 15.50s in his first top-flight meet.

Borne in triumph around the pool by his teammates. The teenage unknown broke down and wept and the tears still

gold medals desperately if it is to match Cuba's bulging hoard.

On the diamond Efrain Garcia of Puerto Rico — which Thursday eliminated the US squad from the men's basketball — grandslammed the United States out of the baseball and set his team well on the way to a 7-1 upset victory in the semifinals.

And in the swimming pool the US 4x100m freestyle relay squad — clear favourites for

for the United States in a fast 3m 50.38s.

The disqualification marked the first time the United States had not won a men's swimming relay in the Pan-American Games.

"I had been aiming to get a medal. But during the race I realised suddenly that I could win the gold," said Gonzalez, first singled out as a promising swimmer at age nine.

Gonzalez, who is preparing

As Gonzalez closed on leader Diebel, Castro rose to his feet and swayed in rhythm with Gonzalez quickening strokes. The Cuban reached the wall first with a supercharged final 15 metres and as the crowd exploded his teammates leapt into the diving pool whooping in wild excitement.

It was the first time the bearded Cuban leader had watched the swimming.

"Having Fidel there sort of helped me," said Gonzalez, the first Cuban to win swimming gold at a top-level meet.

"It was very moving. He is so young and does not have all that much strength."

In baseball, the U.S. opened the scoring against Puerto Rico but met disaster with one swing of the bat from Garcia in the top of the third. With the bases loaded Garcia deposited a fastball from Jeff Ware in the left field bleachers to make it 4-1.

Puerto Rico added a run in the sixth on a balk by U.S. reliever Kenzie Steenstra. U.S. head coach Ron Polk was thrown out of the game for violently arguing the call with the first-base umpire.

Jorge Aranzamendi topped off the game for the Puerto Ricans with a two-run double in the eighth.

Ware said on his giving up the Grand Slam to Garcia: "On the step back during my wind up, my spikes got caught on the mound. I tried to regain my balance and thought I had corrected it by the time I released the pitch."

"Unfortunately it was a fastball that went right down the middle and he hit it out," he said.

Cuba trounced the Dominican Republic 14-5 in the other semi-final.

Americans crowd Indianapolis semis

INDIANAPOLIS, Aug 17: Call them the young Americans — Jim Courier, Pete Sampras and David Wheaton. Leaders of the country's resurgence in the world tennis rankings and ready to knock heads in the US Men's Hardcourts Championship, reports AP.

Americans outnumbered German Boris Becker 3-1 in today's revenge-tinged semifinals of the \$1.1 million tournament.

At 23, Becker is older and more experienced than his American counterparts. The world's top-ranked player has won twice in three years and is seeded No. 1 here.

Sampras, who turned 20 on Monday, is out to change that trend. "It would be nice if an American won," he said. "I think American tennis is as strong as it ever will be."

Becker agreed, singling out

the trio as the game's future greats.

"Those players are there for good," he said. "I believe I'll play them many, many more times and in big finals."

Wheaton is 0-3 lifetime against Becker, but they've never played on hardcourts.

"I expect him to serve-and-volley," Becker said. "I'll mix it up more than Wimbledon. I expect short points."

Playing in just his second tournament of the summer, the 22-year-old Wheaton said he's saving himself for the US Open, beginning Aug 26.

"I didn't play great today. By next week, I'll be ready to go," he said.

Courier also said he isn't playing his best tennis, yet he's winning matches.

He turns 21 today, but Courier is 0-2 playing on his birthday with losses to Michael Chang and Becker in tournaments the last two years.

"It should be a fun day to play," he said.

Since they know each other's games well, Sampras said he must serve well and rush the net against Courier.

"I can't hang back too much against Courier because Jim is more penetrating from the backcourt," he said.

If Becker withstands the American challenge, he could be playing for a third Hardcourts title Sunday. A victory would tie him with three-time winners Ted Schroeder and Stan Smith, both Americans.

He'll also gain a few rankings points over No. 2 Stefan Edberg who lost this week at the Volvo International.

"We chased the No 1 spot for so long. It's a new feeling that he's not in the draw," Becker said. "Maybe I can hold him off another week."

Ivanisevic beats his idol

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut, Aug 17: Fifth seed Goran Ivanisevic says his boyhood tennis idol was John McEnroe, but that didn't stop him from breezing past McEnroe in straight sets 6-4, 6-2, in the Volvo International tennis tournament on Friday, reports Reuter.

Sixteenth seed Marc Rosset also continued to down opponents with a blistering serve, easily ousting Michael Chang in the Quarter-finals 6-3, 6-2. Petr Korda, the 11th seed downed Omar Camporese 6-4, 6-4.

Today's semifinals pit Ivanisevic against ninth-seed and defending champion Derrick Rostagno, who won after Richard Krajicek retired with a knee injury at 3-6, 2-1. Rosset and Korda will face

each other in the other semi-final.

McEnroe lost to the 19-year-old Yugoslavian Friday as quickly as he won his straight set victory on Thursday.

Ivanisevic, who said as a child he would watch McEnroe on television and admire his feisty behaviour, powered his first serves past a flatfooted McEnroe, winning 91 percent of them.

He also denied McEnroe his lethal net game, frequently passing him at the net.

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Under the shadow of Stevenson



HAVANA, Aug 17: Cuban heavyweight Felix Savon is favoured to win a gold medal at the Pan-American Games Sunday, but no matter how impressive he will not escape the long and adored shadow of the greatest amateur heavyweight of them all, reports Reuter.

To Cubans the main man in boxing is still, after all these years, "Teo" — Teofilo Francisco Stevenson — the man who put Cuban fighters on the map forever with his three Olympic gold medals, in 1972, 1976 and 1980, three world amateur championships and a 32-1 record in all those years of fighting under his country's colours.

Stevenson, 39, now and retired since 1988, was so good and such a big draw that he was once offered a million dollars, back when that was a lot of money, to turn professional.

The idea was to match him with Muhammad Ali, then at his prime, to settle the question of which man was the greatest heavyweight of their generation and possibly of all time.

"I was in (West) Germany in 1972 when I was offered a deal by people in the US boxing world," Stevenson told Reuters this week.

"They didn't tell me their names and I didn't ask. They repeated the offer and then when I said no they offered my coach money to convince me to do."

"But I wouldn't exchange my country and my health for any sum of money," said Stevenson, who probably would have had to defeat from Cuba if he had turned professional because fighting for money is outlawed on this communist island.

"Yeah, I wanted to fight him. We offered five (amateur) fights with three rounds each

or three fights with five rounds each," Stevenson said. "But we never received any reply."

I wanted to and was prepared to compete with him. When you compete, you hope to do your best and win the gold medal. You might get the silver, but I wanted the chance against him."

Stevenson said Ali "was a great person and a great athlete and I'm worried about his health. I haven't spoken to him, I only know what I've read or heard."

"He was a great boxer. He was technically excellent. I loved watching him."

Stevenson has undergone a kind of social rehabilitation in the past few years. He had fallen out of favour after an automobile he was driving killed a motorcyclist. He was acquitted of any wrong doing, but some stigma stuck.

But Stevenson's fame is so wide that last month when South African black leader Nelson Mandela visited to thank Cuban President Fidel Castro for his country's support he asked if Stevenson was still fighting. Castro then introduced the ex-fighter to Mandela, a sure sign that Stevenson is completely rehabilitated.

But for most Cuban sports fans "Teo" needs no rehabilitation. He was, is and always will be their hero.

The respect and even adulation is apparent by the crowds drawn to him when he appears in public, many fans scrambling to get his autograph or to be in a photograph with him.

Venezuelan cager fails dope test

HAVANA, Aug 17: Armando Becker, a Venezuelan basketball player, failed his doping test at the Pan American Games for using cocaine, a member of the technical basketball commission said Friday, reports AP.

Eduardo Davagnino of Peru said a coach for Venezuela confirmed that Becker had tested positive for cocaine. Orlando Mosquera, the coach, said the Venezuelan delegation was notified by doctors from the Pan American Sports Organization about the positive test.

Becker was not in uniform for Venezuela's fifth-place game against Brazil. The Venezuelan team doctor, Javier Rodriguez Davallio, said he did not have the information or authority to comment. But he did admit it "was possible" that Becker had been punished.

Earlier in the games, three other athletes failed doping tests, and Mario Vasquez Rana, president of PASO, apparently made two significant mistakes when he announced those results.

First, Vasquez Rana said none of the athletes had used performance-enhancing drugs. Yet, on Thursday, when the name of the third athlete, Peruvian shooter Pedro Garcia, was announced, it was revealed that Garcia used a beta-blocker called propranolol.

Propranolol is a medication for pulse regulation that slows the heartbeat. Shooters sometimes use such illegal substances to calm their nerves and help their aim. It is highly unlikely that a shooter would use such a substance unwittingly.

Garcia was stripped of his silver medal.

Vasquez Rana also had said Tuesday that Mexican rower Jose Gomez, a gold medal winner, had used Advil, which contained a banned substance. On Friday, Dr. Alejandro Chernillo of Chile, head of the medical commission for PASO, said it was CoAdvil, a cold medication.

CoAdvil contains pseudoephedrine, a decongestant that is banned by the International Olympic Committee and its subsidiaries, including PASO. Advil does not contain any banned substances.

Tokyo promises tough contests

LONDON, Aug 17: Extrovert American sprinters, uninhibited African middle-distance runners and highly-skilled European field exponents combine in a heady mix of styles and cultures at the World Athletics Championships next week, reports Reuter.

The event will reflect how dramatically the world had changed since the first Championships in Helsinki eight years ago.

With the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, Germany compete as a united team, while the sports governing body is expected to readmit South Africa.

South Africa have not accepted an invitation to com-

ring gold in all three championships when he defends his 100 metres and long jump titles.

At the age of 30, Lewis is still an astonishing athlete and the long jump gold already looks a formality, despite some optimistic noises from American teammate Mike Powell.

In the 100, though, Lewis faces his explosive Santa Monica track club teammate Leroy Burrell the world record holder and world number one for the past two years.

Burrell and 200 metres sprinter Michael Johnson represent the new generation of athletes since the sport went professional in 1983 and both should be wealthy men when they retire.

Lewis was the first athlete

and trainers shows that drugs were an integral part of east European training programmes.

And Ben Johnson, winner of the 100 metres title in Rome in world record time, has since had his title stripped and world mark expunged following a positive dope test at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

No such suspicion has ever been attached to the Africans who emerged as a force in Rome after a mediocre showing in Helsinki.

KENYAN CHALLENGE

Following Helsinki, Kenya harnessed modern training methods to pure natural talent with startling results.

Kenyans won gold in the men's 800 metres, 10,000 and

fastest in the world year over 1,500.

Europeans have traditionally dominated the field events with one of the championships' outstanding competitors certain to be Ukrainian Sergei Bubka.

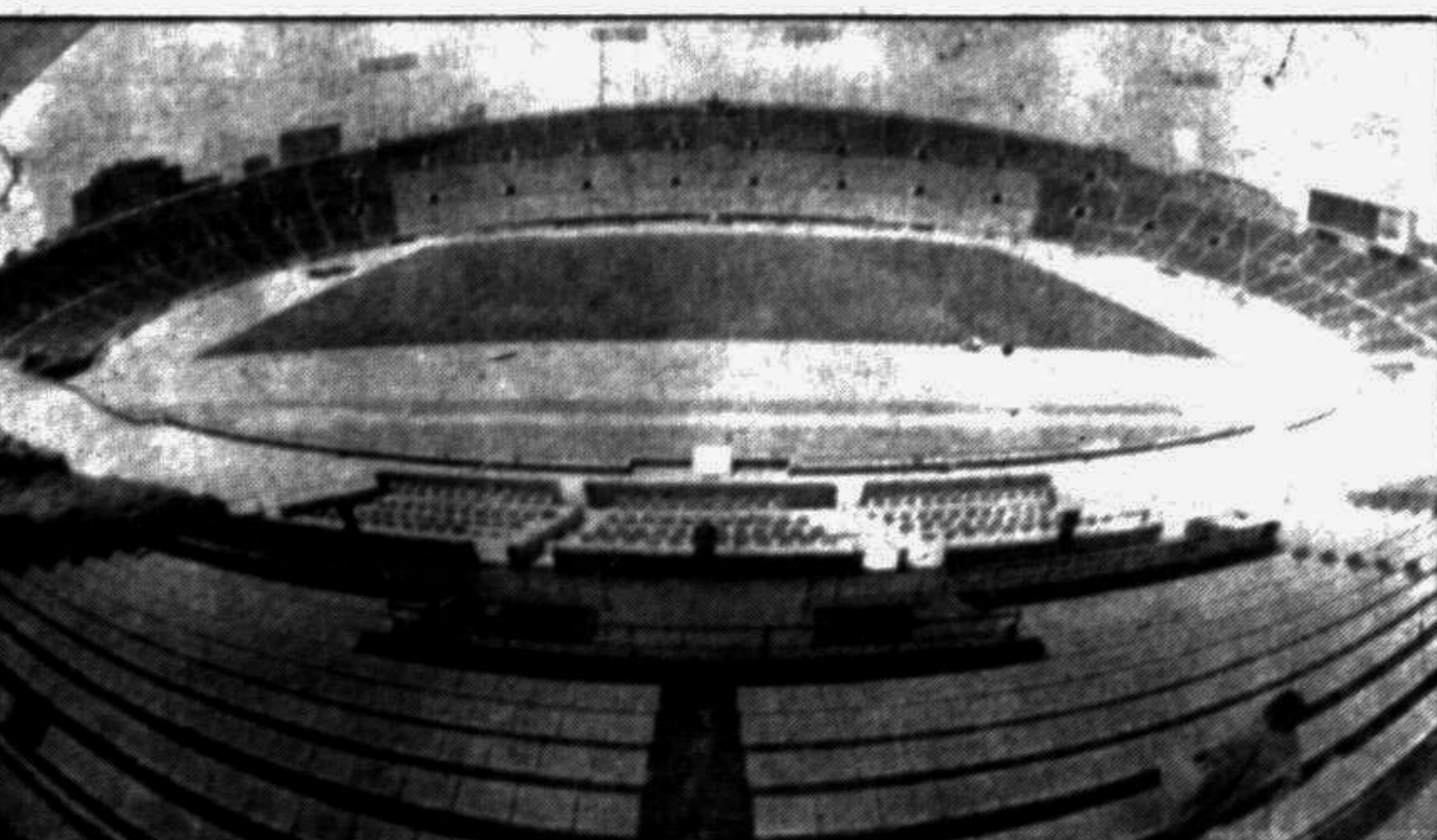
His strength and agility have propelled him to four world pole vault records this year and Tokyo could see a fifth.

The heat and stifling humidity of Tokyo late in August will suit the sprinters with the prospect of times close to the current world records by the high-stepping Johnson in the men's 200 and Merlene Ottey in the women's event.

Ottey considers Florence Griffith-Joyner's world 100 metres record of 10.49 to be out of reach but reckons she can break the American's 200 mark of 21.34 if conditions are favourable.

Born in Jamaica, educated in the United States, resident in Italy and affiliated to a Spanish club, Ottey is the epitome of the modern international runner.

At 31 she is also a tribute to modern conditioning methods which enable athletes to continue years after their predecessors would have retired.



A worker adds a finishing touch to the National Stadium in Tokyo on August 16 in preparation for the forthcoming World Athletic Championships, starting on August 23.

pete in Tokyo, a blow to the ambitions of International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) President Primo Nebiolo.

Nebiolo was desperately keen to have South Africans appear at the first major sporting event since the International Olympic Committee cleared the way for the Republic to re-enter international sport.

But Nebiolo will have the consolation of knowing the championships are an assured success following Helsinki and the 1987 Rome competition.

HELINSKI LINK

One link with Helsinki will be the presence of Carl Lewis, the greatest sprinter and long jumper of his time.

Lewis is one of only three people with a chance of win-

to seize on the possibilities offered in the new era with a successful quest for four golds at the 9184 Olympics seemingly motivated as much by money as fame.

In retrospect Helsinki, a meeting acclaimed by athletes and spectators alike, seems part of a golden age before the sport was tarnished by a succession of drug scandals.

ILLUSORY INNOCENCE

But in reality the innocence was illusory, as Ed Moses, the greatest one-lap hurdler in history, said in an impromptu trackside news conference before the Helsinki Championships even began.

Moses contended that a number of leading performers were illegally aided by performance-enhancing drugs and testimony since from Athletes

marathon in Rome. They were even more successful in the following year at the Seoul Olympics with 800,1,500, 5,000 and 3,000 metres steeplechase titles.

This year in the 800 metres alone they field defending champion Billy Konchellah and Olympic Gold medalist Paul Ereng while Olympic 5,000 metres champion and four-times world cross country champion John Ngugi can not even make the team.

African success is not likely to be confined to Kenya.

Morocco's said Aoutia, perhaps the most versatile track return after injury, has made a successful international return after injury. Zambian Samuel Matete is second only to Moses in the all-time 400 hurdles list and Algeria's Noureddine Morcelt is the

SA athletes to attend IAAF meet

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 17: A group of South African track and field athletes said Thursday it would attend next week's International Amateur Athletics Federation meeting in Tokyo to seek full membership in the organization, reports AP.

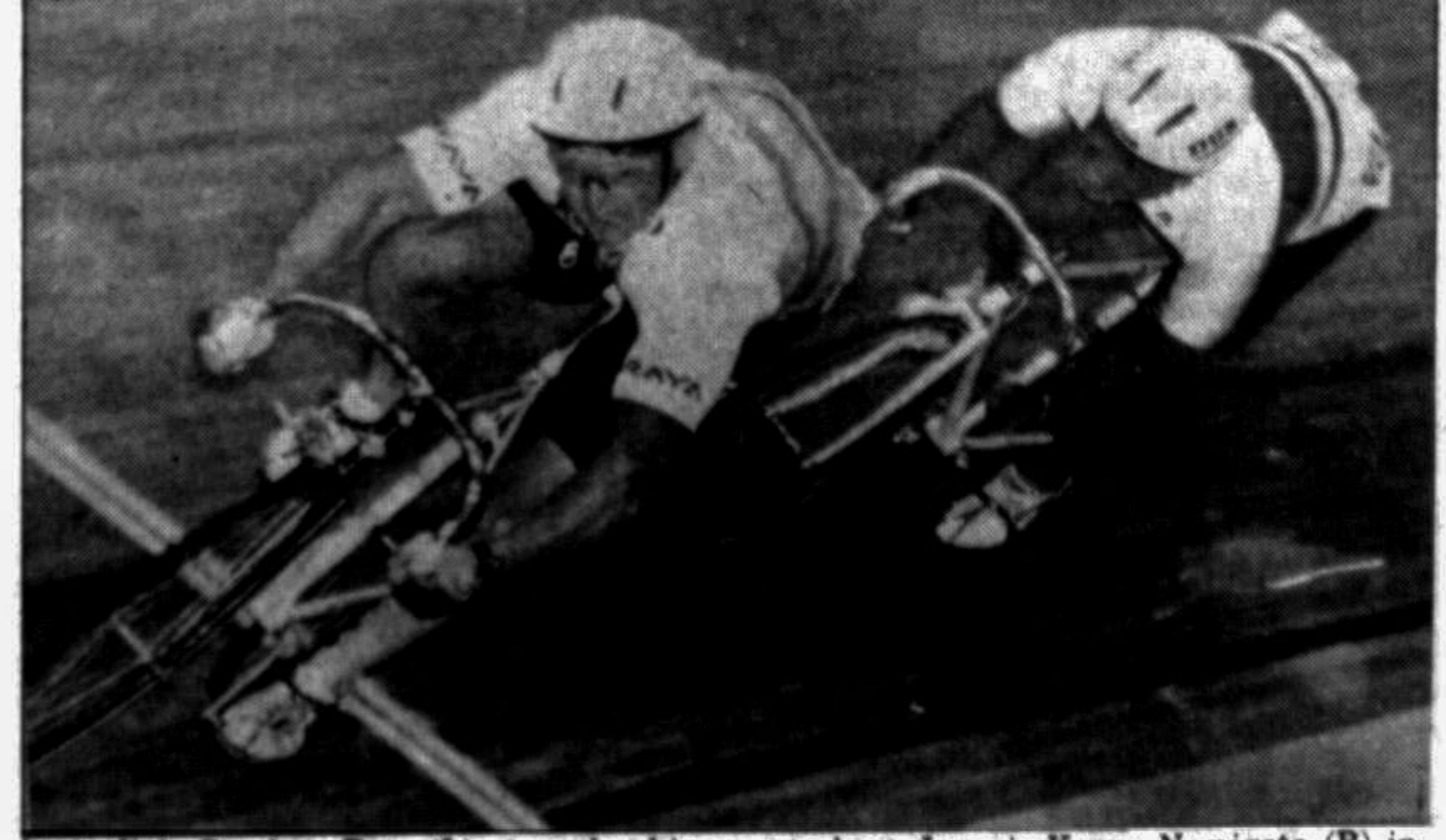
The athletes, angered by a decision by track and field administrators to reject the IAAF's invitation to compete at the upcoming World Championships, formed their own group and asked to take part in the world body's meeting.

Also attending the meeting will be South Africa's unified track and field body, which voted to reject the IAAF invitation but also seeks full membership in the world body.

"Our objectives are to extend the temporary membership the IAAF has granted South Africa and secure international competition in the near future, along with our place at the Barcelona Olympic games next year," said Bruce Fordyce, a distance runner and spokesman for the athlete's group.

Cycling record

STUTTGART, Germany, Aug 17: Francis Moreau of France on Saturday set a world indoor cycling record for 5,000 meters, covering the distance in 5 minutes, 40.617 seconds, reports AP.



Australia's Stephen Pate (L) struggles his way to beat Japan's Kazuo Namigata (R) in quarter-final professional sprint in the World Cycling Championships in Stuttgart, Germany, on Aug 14.

Darnyi to skip European meet

ATHENS, Aug 17: World and Olympic individual medley champion Tamas Darnyi will not compete in next week's European swimming championships, reports Reuter.

"We were informed that he was not ready for the event and that he will not participate," organiser Vasilis Skountis said on Wednesday.