

Watson's plight spurs fresh row

LONDON, Sept 24 : The plight of comatose boxer Michael Watson provoked a heated debate in Britain on Monday about the dangers of boxing with critics calling for the sport to be banned as a brutal anachronism, reports Reuter.

The British Boxing Board of Control went into the ring to defend the sport against accusations that it was barbaric and a throw-back to an uncivilized age.

Famous boxers said Watson knew the risks of entering a hard sport which can offer rich rewards, particularly enticing to youths from poor neighbourhoods.

An uppercot to the head from opponent Chris Eubank in the eleventh round of a super-middle weight World Boxing Organisation title fight on Saturday, which was followed by a flurry of blows in the 12th, caused a blood clot on Watson's brain.

Watson was in a coma on a life support machine on Monday after two operations.

Some commentators said Watson's condition highlighted the need for an inquiry into the sport, examining whether headguards could be introduced or bouts made shorter.

"Boxing is dangerous, we accept that," said the boxing Board's medical officer Adrian Whiteson. "But Michael's injury is not peculiar to boxing. You can get it in other so-called safe sports such as cricket soccer and rugby."

But parliamentarians were swift to condemn boxing.

"It is a throw-back to the days of the gladiatorial contestants in which fighters aim to knock their opponents senseless in as short a time as possible," said James Callaghan, an Opposition Labour Party MP. Menzies Campbell, a Liberal Democrat, said "To continue to permit boxing in a civilised society is extremely difficult to justify."

Former British heavyweight champion Henry Cooper said if boxing were banned it would be driven underground where it would be more dangerous because it would not be so strictly regulated.

Sports Council chairman Peter Yarranton said: "Boxing is a super sport and gives youngsters in particular tremendous confidence in the art of self-defence."

Former World featherweight champion Barry McGuigan, whose African opponent Young Ali died from injuries sustained in their 1982 bout, suggested longer periods between fights, more rest between rounds and greater involvement by doctors during contests.



Star file photo shows Michael Watson (L), the boxer now fighting for his life in a London hospital, sending WBO super-middleweight champion Chris Eubank to the canvas in their first bout last July which Eubank went on to win on a controversial points decision. In the rematch last Saturday, Watson suffered serious head injury after being knocked out in the 12th round and has been unconscious since despite emergency surgery.

BOXING'S BRUTAL TOLL

LONDON, Sept 24 : The serious brain damage suffered by British boxer Michael Watson has reopened the debate over the dangers of the sport and brought renewed calls for its banning, reports Reuter.

At least 13 boxers have died from blows inflicted in the ring in the past 10 years.

Brisbane, Aug 1990 — Australian light-heavyweight boxer Atrick Stone, 24, died from brain damage a day after winning his Queensland state title fight against Gary Wills.

Stockholm, May 1989 — Swedish amateur welterweight Arthur Hender, 19, died in hospital without regaining consciousness nine days after being knocked out 90 seconds into a contest against Per Malmsten.

Lyon, France, March 1989 — Ivory Coast boxer David Thio, 22, died 10 days after being knocked out by American super lightweight Terence Ali without regaining consciousness.

Johannesburg, Aug 1988 — Featherweight Daniel Tetele died after being knocked out in a township fight against fellow South African Aaron Williams. He collapsed as he was leading the ring in an ambulance.

Durban, June 1988 — South African welterweight Brian Baronet, 27, died after three days in a coma after being knocked out in a comeback fight against American Kenny Vice.

Rouen, France, March 1987 — French bantamweight Jean-Claude Vinci, 24, died half an hour after he went into

a coma following a fight against Lionel Jean in Evreux.

London, March 1986 — Scottish welterweight champion Steve Watt died in hospital after undergoing an operation to remove a blood clot on his brain following his fight with England's Rocky Kelly.

Mexico City, Dec 1985 — Mexican welterweight Gerard Derbez died of brain damage following a fight against Jorge Vaca during National Championships.

Sun City, South Africa, Nov 1985 — Black South African boxer Jacob Morake died in hospital from head injuries nine hours after he was knocked out by South African lightweight champion Brian Mitchell.

Merrillville, Indiana, May 1985 — American Shavian Thomas died of head injuries suffered in a lightweight fight after he was stopped in the seventh round by compatriot Chris Calvin.

Miami, March 1985 — American super-heavyweight amateur boxer Howard Brooks died without regaining consciousness after he was knocked out by compatriot Hank Williams in a golden gloves bout.

Miami Beach, Sept 1983 — Mexican Alejandro Bejines died without regaining consciousness after being knocked out by Alberto Davila of the United States for the vacant WBC bantamweight crown.

London, 1982 — Nigerian Young Ali died after being knocked out by Briton Barry McGuigan.

Puncher Morales unconscious

INDIO, Calif, Sept 24 : Fernie Morales, who lost a bantamweight bout to Orlando Canizales over the weekend, was in critical condition following surgery to remove a blood clot in his brain, reports AP.

"He is stable and has not improved," neurologist Dr. Ali Tahmoures said Monday. "He's still unconscious. There's movement on the right side of his body, though, but he remains in a comatose state."

Morales underwent surgery late Saturday at John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital. The fighter showed no apparent sign of serious injury immediately after his loss to Canizales, the IBF champion, earlier in the day.

The 25-year-old Morales apparently fainted about 1/2 hours after losing the 12-round decision at the Desert ExpoCentre. Morales had been knocked down in the second and 12th rounds.

A left-right combination floored Morales in the second, and another left by Canizales capped a barrage of blows in the 12th that sent Morales to the canvas.

"My guess is that the last knockdown punch did it," Dr. Robert Karns of the state athletic commission said. "Otherwise, we would have seen signs of the injury earlier in the fight."

I spent a lot of time with Morales in his dressing room afterward, and he was neurologically intact then.

Maradona's absence hurts the touts

NAPLES, Italy, Sept 24 : The scalpers are missing Diego Maradona more than most people in Naples, reports Reuter.

After doing great business during the Argentine's seven years of soccer sorcery at Napoli, the "Bagarion" (scalper) is feeling the pinch.

The touts stood between thousands of football lovers and an afternoon of Maradona magic, buying blocks of tickets on a Monday for sale before the next Sunday's match.

"The numbers is down to about 500 (touts) from the thousand there were," said a regular spectator at Napoli's San Paolo Stadium who knows several Bagarioni.

"Maradona attracted all sorts of people, whole families west to see him," he said.

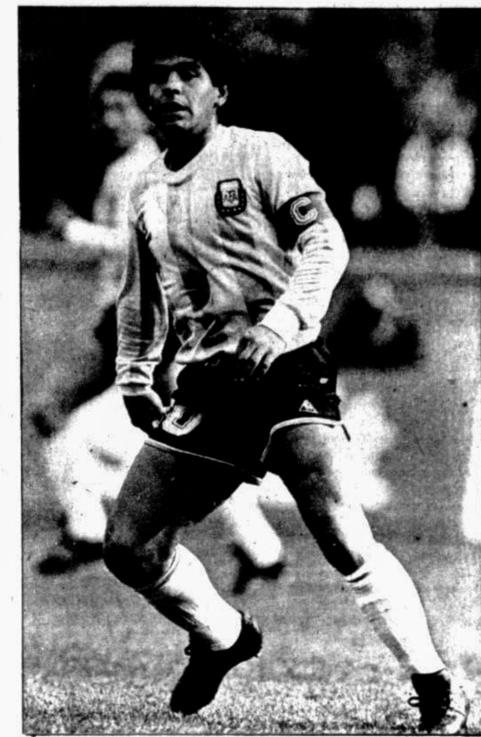
He said crowds at the 80,000-capacity stadium seldom fell below 60,000 when Maradona played. This season, the average is 45,000.

"Being a Bagarino is almost a profession. It's accepted in Naples," he said.

"Police turn a blind eye, many of them interested themselves in acquiring a ticket."

The touts could sell tickets for a 100 per cent profit on big match days, he said.

"Now they're struggling." Napoli are playing quite well this season but the attraction of Maradona was that he



An action study of Diego Maradona

could guarantee a trick or two per match that no other player was capable of.

Season tickets sales for the San Paolo Stadium also fell to little more than half those guaranteed by Maradona, who left last April in disgrace after a positive dope test that earned him a 15-month suspension worldwide.

His contract with Napoli expires in 1993 and the club the Argentine twice led to the league title are hoping he will return after his ban ends next summer.

English clubs accept Premier League at last

LONDON, Sept 24 : Months of legal action, strike threats and bickering ended Monday when English soccer clubs withdrew their final opposition to a super league, reports AP.

The English Football Association, which governs soccer in England, will create a premier division of 20 elite clubs, including champion Arsenal, Liverpool, European Cup winners Cup holder Manchester United and F A Cup holder Tottenham starting next season.

The Football League, which runs the existing 93-strong, four-division format, originally pledged its opposition and battled the F A in the courts, while players threatened to strike.

"The hard work starts now," said Rick Parry, spokesman for the First Division clubs.

"There are commercial negotiations to begin, the constitution of the Premier League to establish, a rulebook to be drawn up and the relationship with the Football Association to establish."

"Negotiations will carry on with the Football League," Parry said. "It's only the start. But I think everything can still be completed in time for the next season."

Barnes' condition deteriorates

LIVERPOOL, England, Sept 24 : Liverpool and England winger John Barnes, who had an Achilles tendon operation last week, was on Monday ruled out of action until Christmas, report Reuter.

Barnes was injured in the second match of the season against Manchester City and initially it was predicted he would be out of action for six weeks.

But Liverpool manager Graeme Souness said on Monday, "He will be out for 12 weeks. He won't be able to put any weight on the ankle for six weeks. It's a lot worse than we first thought."

The surgeon said it was more severe than others, with more thickening around the tendon and more adhesions to be cleared out," Souness said. "It's something which has been building up for a long time and it hasn't just happened this season."

Barnes's absence will also be felt by England manager Graham Taylor, who was resigned to being without him for next month's European Championship qualifier against Turkey at Wembley.

Now he will also miss the November trip to Poland that will determine if England reach next summer's finals in Sweden.

Omachi wins ANA Open golf title

TOKYO, Sept 24 : Akiyoshi Omachi of Japan shot a one-under-par 71 Sunday for a two-shot victory in the 100 million yen (dollar 741,000) ANA Open golf tournament, his first championship in two years, reports AP.

Bernhard Langer of Germany, Chen Tze-ming of Taiwan, American Mark O'Meara and Peete Izumikawa of Japan shared seventh place at 289, seven strokes behind Omachi's 282 total.

Japan's Ryoken Kawagishi, who has played nine tournaments on the US and European tours this season, shot a 71 with five birdies and four bogeys and placed second at 284.

The 32-year-old Omachi shot three birdies and two bogeys Sunday en route to his first victory since he won the Japan series tournament in November 1989. It was the fourth victory of his career.

US ready for any surface

KANSAS CITY, Missouri, Sept 24 : United States captain Tom Gorman has declared his team ready to defend the Davis Cup on any court surface the French pick to host the final, reports Reuter.

"With the group of players we have to choose from, we are not hurting playing on any court surface," Gorman said on Sunday night after Andre Agassi had beaten Carl-Uwe Steeb of Germany in the decisive match of a 3-2 semifinal victory.

The French are expected to host the November 29-December 1 final in Lyons. A decision on the venue and court surface is due within the next 10 days under Davis Cup rules.

"The versatility of our players is so great and so vast that there are so many options open to us," said Gorman.

So far this year, Gorman has used Agassi, Jim Courier, John McEnroe and Brad Gilbert in singles and the doubles teams of Rich Leach-Him Pugh and David Pate-Scott Davis in victories over Mexico, Spain and Germany.

Gorman said the top candidates included all of these players as well as 1990 US Open champion Pete Sampras and the doubles team of Ken Flach and Robert Seguso, who had lost just once in 11 Cup matches before being replaced by Leach and Pugh last year.

"No one is eliminated from being considered for the final," Gorman said, adding that he has not promised anybody a

spot on the team.

Gorman expects the French to select a fast indoor carpet court to help their team star Guy Forget.

"They want a fast surface to give Forget the best shot at winning the two singles (matches) and then trying to scrap out the doubles," he said. If so, Agassi would not be surprised if he was not selected, even though he starred against the Germans by beating both Wimbledon champion Michael Stich and Steeb without losing a set on an indoor clay court at Kemper Arena.

"There are a few guys who could do the trick if it is a fast court," Agassi said.

The United States has won the Cup a record 29 times, including a 1982 victory over France in Grenoble. France has won the Cup six times.

Jets play, Bears win

CHICAGO, Sept 24 : The New York Jets did everything right but win the game, reports AP.

"Maybe it's luck, maybe it's divine intervention," Chicago coach Mike Ditka said after Monday night's 19-13 overtime victory over the Jets gave him his 100th victory as head coach. "We didn't play our best football but we won the game."

It was a game they apparently had lost—several times—before winning.

The Bears, now 4-0, tied the game on the final play of regulation on a 6-yard touchdown pass from Jim Harbaugh to Neal Anderson, then won it on Harbaugh's 1-yard quarterback sneak with 18 seconds left in OT.

The Jets lost after taking a 13-3 lead on Brad Baster's 1-yard touchdown run late in the third quarter.

Kevin Butler's second field goal of the night cut the lead to 13-6 early in the fourth quarter.

Now the Jets were in Command. They were running Blair Thomas, who gained 125

yards on 27 carries, and working the clock.

"They had no timeouts and the formula says we needed a first down to run the clock out," Jets coach Bruce Coslet said.

It appeared to be a winning formula — until Steve McMichael sent the ball from Thomas at the Jets 32 with 1:58 remaining, giving the Bears another chance.

They got down to the 3 before the Jets stiffened. Jeff Lageman's sack and Brian Washington's tackle of Harbaugh on a scramble set up fourth-and-goal at-6 with time running out.

With one second left on the clock, Harbaugh took the snap and threw to Anderson, who made a spectacular catch for tying touchdown.

"I threw it hard and low and Neal made a phenomenal catch," said Harbaugh who completed 28 of 42 passes for 303 yards, all career highs.

After an exchange of punts in overtime, the Jets mounted what appeared to be the winning drive. Ken O'Brien marched New York from its own a first down on the Bears 11.

No time to take any chances on a fumble or interception. Coslet called on Pat Leahy, one of the most reliable kickers in the league, to end it with a 28-yard field goal. But Leahy, who had missed only 7 of his

WBC won't lift ban on Pretoria

BANGKOK, Sept 24 : The World Boxing Council decided Tuesday to continue its 16-year-old boycott of South Africa, but said it will donate at least \$50,000 to build a gymnasium for underprivileged black boxers in the township of Soweto, reports AP.

The decision went against the recommendations of a WBC committee which visited South Africa in July. The committee said the WBC should ease the boycott by rating professional South African boxers and sanctioning their fights abroad.

The committee cited the South African government's progress in dismantling apartheid some other international sports organizations have moved to ease bans against South Africa after the white-minority government agreed to lift the remaining racial segregation laws and merge black and white athletic federations.

The decision to maintain the boycott came on the second day of the WBC's annual convention.

WBC President Jose Sulaiman told the convention that it would be "ridiculous and irresponsible if we very easily fold our tents and allow the

apartheid regime back in the WBC."

He said the "expulsion of South Africa should be continued until we see that in the streets of that country, the elimination of racial discrimination has been completed."

Some black South Africans at the convention praised the decision.

Ngqento Khaya of the South African National Boxing Coordinating Committee, which was set up as an alter-

native to the government boxing body, called it "a step in the right direction."

Yusuf Alooje of the African National Congress, South Africa's leading anti-apartheid group, said, "apartheid is still intact even though some laws have been removed."

But a member of the committee that recommended relaxation of the ban, John Alosti Coffe of Ghana, told the convention Tuesday that "those who are affected by the ban are the blacks."

Delegate Simon block of the British Board of Boxing Control also supported easing the boycott.

Sulaiman said the WBC executive will reconsider the sanctions issue when it meets in six months.

He said the decision to build a gym, staffed with trainers, will demonstrate the WBC's commitment to black boxers.

He said the WBC would contribute \$50,000 initially to build the gym and another \$50,000 later if needed.

The committee that recommended relaxation of the boycott said lack of training facilities was a major problem for black boxers in South.

Robin Young is demanding two million dollars damages for what she calls a "humiliating" incident.

Tyson is due to try to win back his world crown from current title-holder Evander Holyfield in Las Vegas on November 8.

WBC convention opens in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Sept 24 : Delegates from 137 nations gathered here Monday for the opening of the five-day 28th World Boxing Council (WBC) convention, reports AP.

Thailand's Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn attended the convention's opening ceremony during which lifetime achievement awards were given to Shigeru Kojima of the Japan Boxing Commission and Thailand's Sompop Srisomwong.

WBC President Jose Sulaiman presented his annual report, reiterating that the "WBC should primarily interest itself in the safety and overall welfare of boxers."

The WBC president made a renewed plea for improved life insurance benefits for boxers and also called for better medical aid, mandatory title defences and anti-doping tests.

More trouble for Tyson

NEW YORK, Sept 24 : Former world heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson, already facing a possible 63 years in prison if he is found guilty of raping a beauty queen, has now been accused of indecently assaulting an actress, reports AP.

Robin Young is demanding two million dollars damages for what she calls a "humiliating" incident.

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These proud children posed with the General Manager of Sonargaon Hotel, Andrew J. McBurnie (Centre) after being awarded with certificates at the completion of their swimming lesson course of the hotel's Summer School of Swimming. The certificate giving ceremony was held on September 21.



Okamoto's Cup

TOKYO, Sept 24 Ayako Okamoto, a regular on the U S LPGA tour, shot a 2-under-par 70 Sunday and won the 50 million yen (dollar 370,000) Kosaido Asahi Golf Cup tournament by three strokes.

It was the 40-year-old Okamoto's third victory in Japan this year and 51st victory of her career, including 17 overseas.

Okamoto, who started Sunday's round with a one-stroke lead over Shoko Yamamoto of Japan, shot four birdies and two bogeys, finishing with a 54-hole total of 208, eight under par.

Yamamoto shot a 72 with two birdies and two bogeys and placed second at 211.

Okamoto received 9 million yen (dollar 66,700) for the victory and Yamamoto pocketed 4.5 million yen (dollar 33,000).

Tu Ai-yu of Taiwan, who leads the Japan LPGA money earnings list with two victories this season, shot a 70 and finished third at 214.

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Sept 24 World 500 cc Champion Wayne Rainey and Kevin Schwantz, both of the United States, are out of the last leg of the World 500cc motorcycle Grand Prix championship after crashing during a practice session, reports AP.

Austrian 350cc rider Andy Preining also crashed and broke his collarbone Sunday at the Batt Tiga Racing Circuit on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, officials said Monday.

Rainey, 30, skidded and crashed while trying to overtake Briton Niall Mackenzie, the officials said. His Yamaha bike caught fire but was extinguished.

Rainey was hospitalized with a broken right leg, three broken ribs and other injuries.

"I would say it was my worst crash," he said in a telephone interview from his bed at the Subang Medical Center. "I won't be racing this weekend, but I'm not calling it quits. After my injuries are OK, I'll ride again."



Players participating in the inaugural match at the inter-service football championship being introduced with Bogra Area Commander Major General Sadiqur Rahman Chaudhury at Bogra Cantonment on Sept 23. —ISPR photo