

Hosts, India resume gold hunt today

COLOMBO, Dec 25: India and Sri Lanka, sharing 26 of the 28 golds awarded so far at the fifth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, are tipped to win more medals when competition resumes here Thursday after the Christmas break, reports AFP.

Indian athletes are expected to haul in a string of first places in the 25 track and field events, while the Sri Lankans are firm favourites for six more golds in the swimming.

Only if India's top swimmer Sebastian Xavier, who has yet to produce his best, comes out of his shell in the remaining events, could Sri Lanka's swimmers have a fight on their hands.

But local duo Julian Bolling and his cousin Dipika Channugam, who have already snatched seven golds and seven new Games records for Sri Lanka, are still expected to collect more golds in the pool.

Apart from athletics and swimming, India and Sri Lanka will also be fighting for honours in shooting and tennis.

Pakistan hold the aces in the boxing, with nine finalists against India's six and Sri Lanka's five.

Pakistan is also expected to shine in basketball, table tennis and the glamour track and field events traditionally dominated by their arch rivals India.

TUESDAY'S ROUND-UP
An earlier AFP report said: Indian athletes grabbed the spotlight for the first time as Sri Lankan swimmers continued to smash records on the third day of Games Tuesday.

Sri Lanka's SAF Games captain Julian Bolling and local women's star Dipika Channugam each set up two more records in swimming to give their side a total of eight

swimming golds as against four golds by the favourites India.

Bolling broke his own records in the 400m individual medley and 200m freestyle, both the previous marks being established at the third SAF Games in Calcutta in 1987.

India's Sangita Rao also

erased the previous record of 2 min 22.25 secs in the women's 200m freestyle though finishing second to Dipika. It was first set up by India's Anita Sood at the inaugural Games in Kathmandu six years ago.

Besides Dipika, compatriot

49.94 secs. Jossey said afterwards it was the toughest race he had run.

India won five of the seven golds on offer in the athletics events Tuesday.

Sri Lanka's star sprinter Sriyantha Dissanayake collected the solitary gold for the home side when he won the men's 200m.

Pakistan's Ghulam Abbas established the day's only track and field record when he bettered his own SAF timing in the men's 400 meters hurdles clocking 50.14 secs.

Abbas had run it in 50.68 secs in the fourth SAF Games in Islamabad in 1989.

India won two golds in tennis when it defeated Sri Lanka in the finals of the men's and women's team championships.

Pakistan and Bangladesh, the losing semi-finalists in both sections, shared the bronze medals.

Sri Lanka added to its gold haul winning two in the shooting events which are being held for the first time in the SAF Games.

Maldives recorded a 1-0 win over Nepal in a Group B football match while reigning champions Pakistan kept their hopes alive by defeating Bangladesh by a solitary goal in a Group A game.

The Maldives' victory, which came off a goal by forward Ismail Asif in the 30th minute, shattered Nepal's chances of a berth in the final. The Nepalese team had earlier drawn their match against hosts Sri Lanka.

Maldives now meet Sri Lanka on Thursday to decide who would go into the final from their three-nation group.

After a blank first half against Bangladesh, Qazi Mohammad Ashfaq scored the winning goal for Pakistan in the 83rd minute. The win took Pakistan to the top of Group A. They were earlier held to a draw by India.



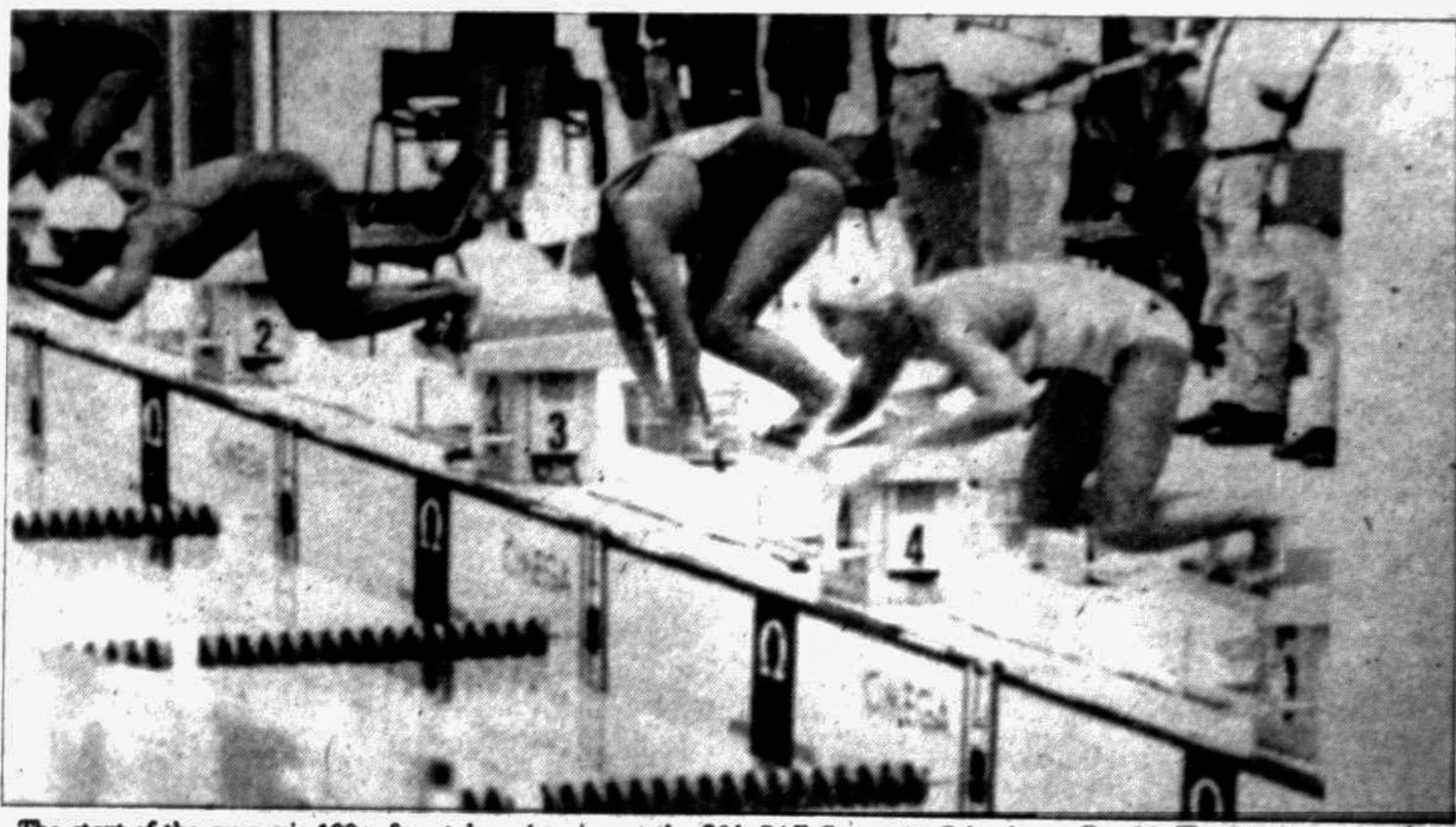
DIPIKA CHANMUGAM... Lankan queen of the pool



REETH ABRAHAM... long jump gold for India

Tehani Weerasinghe also broke the existing women's 100m breaststroke record of 1 min 22.19 secs established by Indian Persis Madan in the 1984 Games.

India's Jossey Mathew ran his best-ever race to win the men's 800m final from Pakistan's Nadir Khan in 1 min



The start of the women's 100m freestyle swimming at the fifth SAF Games in Colombo on Dec 23. The event was won by India's Bula Choudhury (R), with the silver going to Sri Lankan R M Dhammika (L) while India's Sangitha Rao (C) took the bronze.

With weather ruining second Pak-Lanka Test at Gujranwala Faisalabad Test may be shifted

GUJRANWALA, Pakistan, Dec 25: Pakistan and Sri Lanka abandoned their ill-fated second cricket

Test as a draw today and agreed to shift the venue of the third and final Test if bad weather threatened it, reports Reuters.

The third Test is due to be played in Faisalabad on January 2-7. But Pakistan captain Imran Khan agreed to a proposal by Sri Lankan team manager Duleep Mendis to move it if necessary.

"We have come to Pakistan to play cricket," Mendis said

after umpires called off the second Test on the fifth and final day because of poor light.

The two teams had been idle since Friday when bad light cut short the first day's play after only 36 overs.

Since then, showers and drizzle have made parts of the outfield unplayable.

The outfield was damaged by heavy machinery brought in to build a platform for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to address a public meeting at the ground in October.

Loose earth which was sprinkled in a bid to repair the ground turned to mud and all efforts to dry out the trouble spots proved fruitless.

Sri Lanka put Pakistan in to bat after winning the toss on Friday. Pakistan made 109 for two in their first innings, losing the wickets of opener

Shoaib Mohammad for one and Zahid Fazal for 21.

Opener Rameez Raja remained not out for 51 and Javed Miandad was not out on 20.

Mendis said his batsmen had played well in the first Test at Sialkot, which also ended in a draw due to bad weather, but said the bowling needed improvement.

Sri Lanka are due to play a three-day match against the Lahore City Cricket Association from Friday.

Scores: Pakistan first innings 109 for two, after which no play could be held due to bad weather.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the second cricket Test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka today:

Lanka today:

Pakistan: First innings	
Rameez Raja not out	51
Shoaib Mohammad	C
Tillekeratne b Ratnayake	1
Zahid Fazal C Tillekeratne	b
Wickremasinghe	21
Javed Miandad not out	20
Extras (lb-10 nb-6)	16
Total (two wickets, 36 overs)	109

Fall of wickets: 1-3; 2-59
Did not bat: Salim Malik, Imran Khan, Moht Khan, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Aakib Javed, Salim Jaffer.

Bowling:	O	M	R	W
Ratnayake	13	3	39	1
Ramnarayan	10	2	16	0
Wickremasinghe	7	2	27	1
Hathurusinghe	2	1	6	0
Anura	1	0	2	0
Gurusinha	2	0	9	0
Ranatunga	1	1	0	0

Result: Match abandoned as a draw due to bad weather.

1991: Magic deals a body blow to US sport

WASHINGTON, Dec 25: The world of American sports suffered one of its biggest body blows ever in 1991 when basketball star Magic Johnson became the first sporting hero to reveal he had contracted the HIV virus, reports AFP.

Johnson's admission had the effect of a bombshell — but as a positive influence in world attitudes towards AIDS sufferers, it could not have been more effective, whatever Martina Navratilova might have to say about it.

The fact that Johnson picked up the virus through heterosexual contact upset Navratilova and much of the gay lobby in the states, but in the long run it will have taken away much of the stigma of the disease as a "gay plague."

Johnson's revelation overshadowed everything else that happened in American sport this year, which was highlighted by some rags to riches tales.

Chicago Bulls and Pittsburgh Penguins won their first championships and the Minnesota Twins and Atlanta Braves met in the "worst-to-first" World Series.

The Bulls, led by superstar Michael Jordan, ended a 25-year quest for the National Basketball Association title when, after losing the first game of the finals to the Los Angeles Lakers, at home, they swept the next four games.

"When I came here, we started from scratch," said Jordan, who joined them in 1984. "I vowed we'd make the playoffs every year, and each year we got closer. I always had faith I'd get this (championship) ring one day."

One of the keys to Chicago's

triumph was the fact that the players surrounding Jordan began to play more than just supporting roles.

In particular, Scottie Pippen evolved into a scoring threat who took some of the pressure off of Jordan and, after the season was completed, he earned a spot on the US Olympic team.

In the National Hockey League, the Pittsburgh Penguins wrote a similar script, winning their first-ever Stanley Cup by defeating the Minnesota North Stars, who rode a wave of emotion through the play-offs despite having entered the post-season with a losing record.

Prior to 1991, Pittsburgh had finished no higher than second in their division and had never before even reached the Stanley Cup finals. This time they could thank Canadian star Mario Lemieux, who overcame back problems that forced him to miss the first 50 games of the regular season.

The team really started to gel when Lemieux returned and general manager Craig Patrick traded for defenseman Larry Murphy and Peter Tagliabue, along with Ulf Samuelsson and Grant Jennings.

Tragedy struck in the off-season, however, when coach Bob Johnson, who led the team to victory in just his first season, died of a brain tumor.

Johnson's motto, "stay focused," has remained with the Penguins as they attempt to repeat this season.

Perhaps the greatest "rags to riches" story of the year occurred in baseball, with two teams rising from the basement to the penthouse and then producing one of the most memorable World Series ever.

"This was, I think, the greatest World Series ever," said Major League baseball commissioner Fay Vincent after the Minnesota Twins edged out the Atlanta Braves 1-0 in the 10th inning of Game Seven.

It was a fantastic finish to a Cinderella story, leaving both teams with something positive.

"The whole series was like a storybook and tonight was chapter seven," said Twins manager Tom Kelly as his team celebrated its second

team's younger players, including Ronnie Gant, who paced the club with 33 home runs, and pitchers Tom Glavine, John Smoltz and Steve Avery — who pitched a pair of shut-outs against the Pittsburgh Pirates in the play-offs.

The Twins received similar inspiration from veteran pitcher Jack Morris, who was voted "most valuable player" of the World Series, having gone the distance in the decisive seventh game.



MAGIC JOHNSON

championship in four years. "I don't know who played better. We probably should cut it (the trophy) in half."

Youth played a major role in the success of both clubs, combined with the resurgence of a pair of veterans most experts had given up on.

Terry Pendleton, cast off the year before by the St Louis Cardinals, led the National League in batting and was voted "most valuable player."

His leadership proved invaluable to some of the

team's younger players, including Ronnie Gant, who paced the club with 33 home runs, and pitchers Tom Glavine, John Smoltz and Steve Avery — who pitched a pair of shut-outs against the Pittsburgh Pirates in the play-offs.

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MICHAEL JORDAN

"I just kept fighting and, somehow, we figured out a way to win this thing," he said.

Twins' second baseman Chuck Knoblauch characterized the youthful drive of the team and he was named "rookie of the year" in the off-season.

In American football, the New York Giants won their second Super Bowl title in four years, defeating the Buffalo Bills 21-19 in one of the most exciting contests in recent years.

1991: Political upheavals redraw the world's sporting map

PARIS, Dec 25: The last rites are being performed over Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the greatest sporting empire ever seen, as 1991 expires, but the painful rebirth of South African sport is in the last stage of labour now apartheid has officially been killed off, reports AFP.

The year opened with the East German sports machine refusing to die quietly in a unified Germany as the full tale of drug abuse and political manipulation seeped from the corpse.

The self-destruction of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia closed 1991, leaving a huge question mark hanging over the world sporting map.

The breakup of the sporting superpower, whose 1,221 medals since 1952 were more than any other country's, leaves chaos and confusion.

Out with the corrupt communist system, which demanded top sports honours to prove the superiority of the Kremlin system, went the structures that supported top performers in a cradle-to-

grave cocoon. The all-powerful Soviet State Sports Council Goskomspor has been wound up and axed funding to 25,000 athletes and 1,200 coaches — two months before the Winter Olympics in Albertville and only half a year ahead of the Summer Games in Barcelona.

Into the vacuum have rushed only airy statements from officials that Soviet teams will survive in one form or another, but the pledges may prove no more than mere words as the emerging republics flex their sporting muscles.

Already the independent Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia will field their own teams in Albertville and in Barcelona.

The other 12 Soviet republics had agreed to send a united team, but the two biggest — Russia and the Ukraine — have since sought recognition by the International Olympic Committee.

president Vitaly Smirnov is desperately fighting to maintain at least the facade of a joint team under whatever name can be agreed — commonwealth of independent states or whatever.

He needs 800,000 dollars for the Winter Games and 3.3 million for the Summer and has started an Olympic lottery. Sports giant Adidas has pulled out of an 800,000 dollar annual sponsorship deal.

The optimistic Smirnov has come up with a new flag — still red but with a flame in the centre and a star in the middle of that — to replace the hammer and sickle. But the bickering continues over an anthem.

The glory days when the Soviets took 55 gold medals in the 1988 Seoul Olympics or 29 medals at the 1991 athletics World Championships in Tokyo are over.

Sergey Bubka, the world pole vault record holder who guarantees gold medals, is Ukrainian, and proud of it, even if he has joined the

"brawn drain" and now lives and trains in the West.

His Sports Minister Valery Borzov, the Ukraine's Olympic Committee president, who won 100m and 200m golds in Munich, is a man with a mission — to give the republic a strong presence on the world stage.

Borzov points out that there are 53 million Ukrainians — only a couple of million short of the population of Britain or France — and he has no intention of toeing an anachronistic Soviet line for the good of a hated entity that no longer exists.

"It's perhaps also the collapse of a system that is not totally sporting," Borzov admitted. Lured tales of drugs, hormones and suppression of the individual can be expected shortly.

The ex-sprinter backed a united team for the Olympics, but the Ukraine Parliament has since asked the IOC to be allowed an independent representation at Barcelona.

Such confusion over who will and who won't be there is

mirrored in numerous sports as the individual federations take over responsibilities held previously by Goskomspor.

Latvia and Estonia, finding it too late to qualify for Olympic rowing and volleyball, have reluctantly agreed to let oarsmen and players compete for places on the Soviet team.

Similarly the draw has already been made for the 1993 World Basketball Championships naming the USSR as sole contenders from the empire.

SAFRICANS RETURN

South Africa pencilled themselves back on to the world sporting map — minus the famous Springbok emblem — as the various black and white federations moved hesitantly towards unity after 30 years in the international wilderness.

A leading anti-apartheid sports official has been appointed to solve the squabbles which are blocking South African athletes from competing in Barcelona.

The three feuding athletics

bodies must unite by January 23 or miss the Games.

The Cricket Boards sorted themselves out swiftly and were rewarded with a surprise trip to India while the rugby World Cup looks set to be staged in South Africa in 1995.

But South African football, dominated by blacks and, ironically racially integrated, long failed to settle differences in time to make the qualifying draw for the 1994 World Cup.

YUGOSLAV DILEMMA

In Yugoslavia, despite the bloodshed and bitterness, the national football team qualified for the European Championship finals in Sweden.

However, no-one is betting on their chances of turning up, particularly with Germany dragging Europe into early recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. And the odds on the commonwealth of independent states holding together a team from the old Soviet Union for the tournament next June look extremely slim.

Slovenes are already com-

peting in the skiing World Cup under their own colours rather than the flag of federal Yugoslavia.

The year also saw Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania go into the hat for the World Cup qualifiers, only a few months after the tiny Faroe Islands put their name on the international sporting map with a stunning victory over Austria in the European Championship group stages.

It was also the year Israel joined Europe for World Cup qualifiers after many Asian nations refused to play against the Jewish state.

Israel is expected to benefit as a sporting power with the arrival of top class sportsmen and women among the tens of thousands of Soviet Jews who are pouring into the country.

KOREAN THAW

The final Cold War frontier between North and South Korea shows encouraging signs of coming down as far as sports are concerned.

South Korea is still hoping to unite with North Korea for

the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Seoul is seeking talks with Pyongyang, which boycotted the 1988 Games, at the truce village of Panmunjom at an early date.

The prospects improved greatly with the landmark reconciliation agreement signed by the North and South Prime Ministers in December.

South and North Korea fielded joint teams for the World Table Tennis Championships in Japan last April and for the World Youth Football Championship in Portugal in June.

The 1996 Olympics in Atlanta might see South Africa, the Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and perhaps a group of central Asian republics competing alongside the Baltic states, Croatia, Slovenia and even a united Korea.

But after boycotts, bans and divisions, dare anyone believe that the dramatic events of 1991 will usher in a new era in which athletes throughout the world of sport and not an ideological propaganda point?