

Biggest Winter Olympics begin today



Participants who will feature in today's opening ceremony of the Albertville Winter Olympics go through a rehearsal inside the stadium Feb 6. —AFP photo

ALBERTVILLE, Feb 7: Circus spectacle and the wall of Alpine horns mark the opening of the Olympics tomorrow, raising the curtain on the greatest winter sports show on earth, reports Reuter.

Organisers are promising a breath-taking opening ceremony to fit the Games' billing as the biggest ever Winter Olympics.

Athletes from a record 64 nations, some new and others back for the first time in memory after the end of the cold war, will be treated to a two-hour spectacle that will mix mimicry of their sports with the dared evil stunts of the circus.

Human mobiles suspended from cranes will dangle 30 metres (100 feet) above Albertville's ceremonial stadium, where trapeze artists, trampoline clowns, jugglers and dancers on skates and skis will entertain a crowd of 33,000.

Two billion people are expected to watch on television as French President Francois Mitterrand opens the games to a fanfare of 12 giant Alpine horns after a fly-past by military jets trailing smoke in the colours of the Olympic rings.

The Olympic flame will be lit from a distance by a torch bearer who will ignite a ball of fire which will sizzle along a cable to a bowl just outside the stadium.

The identity of the French torch bearer is meant to be the most closely guarded secret of the open-air evening ceremony, staged against the soaring natural backdrop of the Savoie Alps.

But the confident tip is for Alpine skier Nathalie Bouvier, downhill silver medalist at last year's World Championships.

She would have been one of France's main Olympic hopes but broke both legs in Japan a year ago and has not competed since.

Names that spell artistry, glamour and glory will be in the parade of more than 2,000 athletes at the 16-day Games.

"Alberto Tomba, slalom and giant slalom winner at Calgary four years ago, will carry Italy's flag and then bid to be the first successful defending champion in Olympic Alpine skiing.

Tomba could yet steal the limelight from the fast men of the downhill, the blue riband

event of the Games set for Sunday at Val d'Isere.

Toni Nieminen of Finland hopes also to make history, eyeing triumph at just 16 in Sunday's normal hill ski jump to become the youngest male gold medalist at Winter Games.

The new nations of Croatia and Slovenia will complete for the first time alongside the Baltic states which came and went and are now back again—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Games will show whether the Russian-dominated team from the new Commonwealth of Independent States can emulate the defunct Soviet Union, winners of the most medals in Calgary.

Or will Germany become the new medal machine, oiled for a gold rush with its first unified team at an Olympics since 1964?

Others will be at the Games simply to say they were there — among them sunshine athletes from Honduras, Bermuda, Jamaica and Swaziland.

The French will be hoping for a hero to follow the great Jean-Claude Killy, winner of three Alpine skiing golds the last time France staged a winter Olympics at Grenoble in 1968.

And Killy, now co-Chairman of the Albertville organisers, will be hoping the weather, the biggest threat to the suc-

Proud 11-yr-old

ANNÉCY, Feb 7: An 11-year-old girl from Annecy was chosen from among 30 young candidates to sing the French national anthem at the Olympic opening ceremony, a local newspaper reported Friday, reports AP.

The Savoy regional daily said Severine du Peloux, a student at Saint Michel d'Annecy school, was a bit nervous, but her voice would be strong for Saturday's ceremony.

The Olympic organising committee asked teachers in the Savoy region to recommend young singers for the honour. Severine's version of "La Marseillaise" was chosen after about 30 children auditioned.

Annecy is a resort city about 60 kilometers (37 miles) from Albertville, the Olympics host.

cess of an Olympics spread across 10 different venues in a huge area of Alps, will smile on the Games.

RHYMING REVUE

AP adds: Borrowing from the verse style of children's author, Dr. Seuss, the games organizers plan to greet each of the 64 competing nations with four-line rhymes.

"A tropical island, the feared barracuda, will they like they swim? Meet the team from Bermuda," is typical of the verses tailored for teams arriving at the ceremony opening the 16th Winter Olympics.

Some 30,000 spectators will watch the festivities in a temporary stadium adjacent to Albertville's new outdoor speedskating track and the new indoor figure skating arena.

The verse introductions are the first dash of panache for the two-hour-plus spectacle.

The rhyming introductions were unveiled Thursday evening at a public rehearsal of the opening ceremony, and most of the verses resembled doggerel:

"The fact that they're here, sounds a brand new symphony, so we're proud that they're here, the team from Estonia."

"They're ready to fly, their step is so perky, please welcome the team, competing from Turkey."

And this: "Competitors nimble and quick as the wind, let's hear the applause for the great Swaziland."

Swaziland has a one-man team — a lone skier. He got in this week after the Portuguese dropped out, so this rhyme was apparently composed in haste.

Two of the more compelling verses celebrate two new entries: Croatia and Lithuania.

"With honours that mount, to the highest of stations, for the very first time, competing Croatsians," will greet those athletes. The Lithuanians will arrive to: "Oh what a roar, to some it's a mania cheering the team, from far Lithuania."

Each verse was read in French and then in English, occasionally to the delight of people in either language.

Two Frenchmen, who looked puzzled after the English reading, went apoplectic after hearing a version in their native tongue.

IOC would like to go ahead with blood testing

COURCHEVEL, Feb 7: Blood tests which could be introduced at the Albertville Winter Olympics would be used to detect the blood doping drug EPO, medical officials said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

EPO is the hormone drug erythropoietin which is used to increase the red blood cell count for kidney patients.

It was banned by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) two years ago amid fears that athletes would use it as a substitute for blood doping.

Blood doping is the technique by which a quantity of blood is removed from the body of an athlete and pumped back just before competition to enhance the distribution of oxygen to the muscles.

The presence of EPO is not detectable in the standard urine analysis conducted at the Olympics.

Prince Alexandre De Merode, the IOC medical commission chairman, told a news conference that development of the test to detect EPO had almost been completed.

Tendulkar may be India's trump card



PERTH, Australia, Feb 7: India's bid to recapture the World Cup trophy hinges on the virtuosity of a cricketer who was only allowed to stay up and watch that triumph on television as special treat, reports Reuter.

For when Kapil Dev's team were stunning the West Indies in the final at Lord's Sachin Tendulkar was a 10-year-old boy growing up in Bombay.

He now represents India's best chance of upsetting the odds again. At 18, he established himself as his country's most consistent batsman on this season's tour of Australia, their sharpest fielder and useful change bowler.

Cherubic in looks, mature in deed, repressing enthusiasm about his cricket Tendulkar possesses an outrageous talent.

He made a Test hundred before he could drive, vote or marry. Indeed, after his match-saving 119 not out against England at Old Trafford in 1990, he was given a car he was not legally entitled to drive.

It is said Bombay traffic policemen, recognition their

youthful hero at the wheel, merely aided his progress through that teeming city's traffic.

Tendulkar, just 1.65 meters tall, made his debut as a 16-year-old against a Pakistan side with Imran Khan, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis in the attack, surviving a bumper barrage in his fourth Test later in the series to secure a draw.

He was unbeaten 148 against Australia in Sydney last month and his second Test hundred, and he has now played 16 Tests with a batting average of more than 40 and 31 one day internationals. A fast learner, he averaged 44.55 in the recent limited overs World Series with four fifties.

The figures, however, tell only part of the story. It is the style in which he makes his runs, with perfect placement and the ball rarely rising above the ground.

When India were pressing for a declaration in the Sydney Test he played one audacious late cut for four from a ball Merv Hughes had speared into his leg stump.

The burly Hughes stood arms akimbo glaring at this impudent, diminutive junior

with an expression suggesting he would love to ask him outside to discuss the shot man-to-man.

Tendulkar so far appears able to cope with the adulation he receives from the bulk of India's 850 million-plus population.

His simple delight in playing cricket helps. As the temperature reached 39 degrees

at school. At 15 he hit a century in his maiden first-class innings for Bombay. The rest, as they say, is and will be cricket history.

Indian captain Mohammad Asharuddin well aware of the difficulties to living upto youthful promise after hitting three centuries in his first three Test at the age of 21, is full of praise for Tendulkar's tour form.

"He was really played tremendously well and I am very pleased," he said. "There has been a lot of pressure on him, everyone was looking at him to do well, and he has thrived on it. He is doing all the hard work for the other batsmen."

Opposing captain Allan Border said: "I shudder to think what he is going to be like when he matures. He's got so much time to play."

Border's comments are echoed by former Australian captain Richie Benaud, who rates Tendulkar the best young batsman I've seen in many years.

Can he lift a capable but not outstanding side to glory? A difficult task, but the omens suggest this could be the year of the teenager in Melbourne.

Last month Monica Seles another 18-year-old, destroyed all opposition at the Flinders Park tennis center a cross the railway tracks from the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Then teenage pop group new kids on the block took the city by storm. Now Tendulkar hopes to do the same.



SACHIN TENDULKAR

Celsius at pre-Test news in Perth, he kept wheeling away, bowling his little seamers as long as anyone was prepared to bat.

At home, Tendulkar grew up in a household which put little store by cricket. The youngest of four children, now retired were cricket followers and Sachin's developing talents were first noticed by brother Ajit.

At 14 he hit a triple century

BJMC earn their first point

Sports Reporter



Dhaka Wanderers Club and newly-promoted Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) shared points in yesterday's Star First Division football league encounter at the Mirpur Stadium. It was BJMC's first point of the league.

BJMC went ahead in the 31st minute of the match but failed to cling to it as Wanderers, in their traditional black-and-whites, drew level just six minutes later.

Wanderers dominated the proceedings with Mosharrar spearheading most of their forays. BJMC, however, scored against the run of play when striker Arif found the net with an angular shot from outside the box 1-0.

Wanderers came back strongly a few minutes later when Mosharrar took a powerful shot at goal which was punched back by the custodian but Mustakim, lurking near, failed to cash in on the loose ball.

The equaliser came shortly after this when Mustakim, the man who created a do by scoring two goals for Mohammedans against Abahani in a Cup final beat the BJMC custodian with another angular drive.

BJMC, made up of the schoolboys from the BKSP, were deprived of a chance to forge ahead twelve minutes into the second half when Masum was fouled by Diju in the Wanderers penalty area but referee somehow managed to overlook the incident.

Mosharrar of Wanderers failed to give his side the lead when BJMC's Salam Khan saved his shot from the goal line. Dolon missed an absolute sitter for Wanderers when he failed to beat a helpless custodian midway through the second half.

Yellow cards: Diju and Moin

(Wanderers), Niaz, Nobu and Sohel (BJMC).

WANDERERS: Arun, Ali Monsur, Joy (Nipu), Tuhin, Yousof, Diju, Moin, Dolon, Mosharrar (Uzzal), Belal and Mostakim.

BJMC SC: Tipu (Nasir), Mamun, Rashed, Niaz, Yousof, Salam, Bakir (Firoz), Sohel, Arif, Aminur (Rana) and Nobu. Referee: Hamiduzzaman.

The second match of the day, between Dhaka Mohammedan Sporting Club and Dhanmondi Club, fell through because of the heavy downpour in the late afternoon.

The match will be played today at 5 pm.

With the league committee making no arrangement for rain check, spectators who bought tickets for yesterday's match at Taka 12 for the stands will have to buy tickets once again today to witness the match.

Lewis' British indoor debut



LONDON, Feb 7: Carl Lewis, the greatest track and field athlete of his generation, makes his first British indoor appearance on Saturday when he runs over 60 metres at an international meeting in Glasgow, reports Reuter.

Lewis, who has won six Olympic titles, is making a brief sortie into Europe as he starts his preparations for this year's Barcelona Olympics.

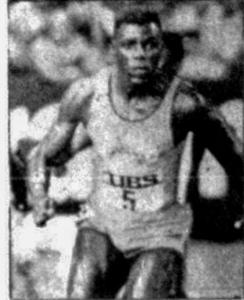
On Wednesday the 30-year-old American won his first long jump competition of the year when he edged fellow American Llewellyn Starks in Stockholm.

"I've just arrived in Europe and I'm a bit tired but I think it worked out pretty well," Lewis said.

Lewis has left his options open for what is likely to be his last Olympics, although he

has confirmed he will try for three golds.

He plans to compete in the 100 and 200 metres at the US



CARL LEWIS

trials in June as well as the long jump and vie for a spot on the 4x100 relay team.

Saturday's meeting has attracted one of the best indoor fields ever assembled in Britain.

The 60 metres field includes American world 100 metres bronze medalist Dennis Mitchell, Namibia's world 200 silver medalist Frankie Fredericks plus Jamaican Ray Stewart, who finished third behind Ben Johnson and Lewis in the 1987 Rome World championships 100 metres final.

The 400 metres features two of Lewis's team-mates in the Santa Monica Track Club with Olympic champion Steve Lewis running against Danny Everett, who set a world record in Stuttgart four days ago.

"This is an outstanding lineup which is just what the Kelvin Hall and the Glasgow public deserve," British Athletic Federation promotions officer Andy Norman said. "I am sure that many stadium records are under threat."

Cason covets Olympic gold



NEW YORK, Feb 7: American sprinter Andre Cason is hoping 1992 ends the way it has begun, reports Reuter.

Cason opened the track year in Belgium last month by clocking 6.45 seconds in the 60 metres to break the world indoor record. He wants to cap the season with an Olympic gold medal in the 100 metres at Barcelona.

That's a lofty goal, since Cason will have to work hard just to qualify for a US team drawn from a wealth of American sprinting talent.

Last year, Cason finished fourth at the US championship and failed to qualify for the open 100 at the World Championships in Tokyo, however, he did compete on the 400-metre relay team that set a world record.

This year, the 23-year-old Cason, who is slated to compete in the 60 metres on

Friday night in the Millrose Games at Madison Square Garden, must place among the top three at the US Olympic trials to earn a shot at Olympic gold.

Carl Lewis and Leroy Burrell, whose 60 metres record of 6.48 Cason broke,



ANDRE CASSON

are considered strong favourites to qualify, which would leave one spot for Cason. But the Tampa, Florida resident says not even those two giants are sure to win Olympic berths.

"No one knows what's going to happen," said Cason. "They're not guaranteed sports. I'm going to be in strong contention for one of those sports."

When Cason speaks, he has a look of determination in his eyes. He vows not to let his year, which started on such a high note, end in anticlimax.

"I'm training even harder now" after the world record, Cason said. "I believe if you get on a high, you're quick to come down. My career can't be made off a world record in the relay or in the 60 dash."

"I'm focusing on two very important races — the Olympic trials and the Olympic Games.

The goal I've set is to win the Olympic gold medal."

Forget's exit

MILAN, Feb 7: French Davis cup hero Guy Forget, and Spain's Emilio Sanchez were both ousted in the Milan indoor tennis tournament on Thursday, leaving just two seeds in the running, reports Reuter.

American Patrick McEnroe beat the French second seed 7-6, 2-6, 7-6 in a second round match lasting two hours 40 minutes, taking both tiebreaks 7-4.

"I tried to be aggressive and put a lot of pressure on his serve," McEnroe said.

Things look up for Tyson



INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana, Feb 7: Two fellow beauty pageant contestants testified here Thursday that the alleged rape victim of Mike Tyson alluded to marriage and talked about the former world heavyweight champion's money, reports AP.

Madelyn Whittington, who competed in the Miss Black America pageant along with the woman who has accused Tyson of raping her here last July, told the jury she met the woman in a restroom hours before the incident.

"She told me Mike Tyson had asked her out," Whittington said.

"I asked her whether she was going and she said Yes," of course she's going. "It's Mike Tyson. He's dumb and he's got a lot of money."

Tyson, 25, who denies he raped the 18-year-old beauty pageant contestant, faces up to 99 years in jail if convicted of rape and criminal deviate behaviour. A third charge of confinement was thrown out on Tuesday.

A second contestant, Parquita Nassau, testified that she saw Tyson and his accuser together at the pageant rehearsal on July 16. The alleged rape occurred early in the morning of July 19 at Tyson's

hotel. "I saw them cuddling up to each other," she said, adding: "They looked like they were involved."

Prosecutor Greg Garrison pointed out, however, that Nassau had told investigators months ago that she did not paid much attention to Tyson and the woman when they were together.

Nassau went on to say she overheard a conversation between the alleged victim and a friend, who said: "Here comes your husband (Tyson), but he can't talk too well."

"He'll make all the money, and I'll do all the talking," she said, was the woman's response.

Whittington told the jury the woman had mentioned Tyson's former wife Robin Givens, but under cross-examination admitted she merely had the impression that Tyson's accuser wanted to be like Givens, who divorced Tyson in 1989 after a stormy eight-month marriage.

The trial resumed here Thursday after a one-day recess called in the wake of a deadly fire early Wednesday morning at the hotel where the 12 jurors and three alternates were being sequestered.

The fire, which is under investigation, killed two firefighters and one elderly hotel

guest. Members of the jury, dressed in night clothes, were safely evacuated and taken to another hotel.

On Thursday, the jurors were questioned one at a time by Marion county Superior Court Judge Patricia Gifford to determine whether the fire had left them too shaken or afraid to continue with the case.

One member of the jury was dismissed and replaced by an alternate.

No evidence of arson has been found, according to investigators, but security was tightened at the court house Thursday, and the jurors were brought in via an underground car park instead of being dropped off at the street-level entrance.

"We just wanted to make sure we maintained the integrity of the courtroom setting," said Lieutenant Timothy Harty, a police spokesman.

Prosecutors completed their case Tuesday after calling 20 witnesses, including the alleged victim's mother, who told the jury her daughter's personality changed abruptly following the incident.

In his opening statements, defense attorney Vincent Fuller hinted that his client would testify, but it was not known whether or when Tyson might take the stand in his own defense.

Smirnov keeps job

COURCHEVEL, Feb 7: Vitaly Smirnov retained his position as a vice-president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Thursday when the IOC confirmed him as its representative in Russia, reports Reuter.

Smirnov was formerly the member in the now defunct Soviet Union.

Russia and four other republics in the newly-formed Commonwealth of Independent States are competing as a unified team at the Albertville Winter Olympics which open on Saturday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Thursday's answer 8-7

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