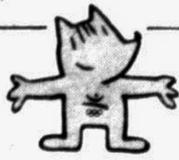


OLYMPIC SPECIAL



Ghost in the flag

BARCELONA, July 26: Sharp-eyed viewers may have spotted a ghost from the past at the Olympic Games opening ceremony: the hammer and sickle of the former Soviet Union, reports Reuter.

Of the 12 former Soviet republics competing in Barcelona as the United Team, just one — the central Asian state of Tajikistan — has preserved the familiar Soviet emblem despite the collapse of communism and the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The Tajik flag — Red, white and green horizontal stripes with a yellow hammer and sickle in the top corner — was one of 12 mostly unfamiliar banners on show as athletes and officials from the United Team marched in Saturday night's parade.

Others included the white, blue and red of Russia, Ukraine's blue and yellow and a selection of exotic central Asian flags featuring Islamic crescents and stars, sons and sheaves of corn.

Tajikistan, an ultra-conservative Muslim state which borders Afghanistan, has just three athletes in the United Team, of whom hammer thrower Andrei Abduvaliyev may be the best medal hope.

Sportsmen and women from the former Soviet states will have their own national flags raised and anthems played at medal ceremonies in Barcelona.

US grappler upsets champ

BARCELONA, July 26: Dennis Koslowski upset the defending champion in the 100-kilogram (220-pound) class as the US Greco-Roman team got off to a perfect start in the Olympic wrestling preliminaries Sunday, reports AP.

Koslowski, a 32-year-old veteran from St. Louis Park, Minnesota, who is trying to become America's first two-time Olympic medalist in the Greco-Roman style, used a gut wrench move to post a 2-0 first-round victory over Andrzej Wronski of Poland.

Koslowski had lost five bouts to Wronski, including two in European competitions earlier this year, and had never beaten him.

OLYMPIC QUOTES

BARCELONA, July 26: There's been a lot of talk, and little action, in the run-up to the Barcelona Olympic Games. Here are some of the things that athletes and officials have said.

"Living for four months in such conditions and coming here is like paradise and hell." — Josko Budolic, Bosnian Olympic official arriving in Barcelona from the besieged city of Sarajevo.

"Most of us didn't train for a long time. A couple of guys came straight from the front line." — Bosnian swimmer Janko Gokjovic.

"Without commercialisation, the Olympic Games would have come to an end." — International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch.

"We're getting the same food every day. Fortunately there's a McDonald's here." — US sprinter James Jett.

"In a sense, he's in hiding" — Canadian coach John Cannon on the whereabouts of sprinter Ben Johnson, villain of the 1988 Olympics.

"You just have to pass the baton; you don't have to hold hands." — John Cannon again when asked whether other Canadian sprinters resented the prospect of Johnson's presence in the 4x100 metres relay team.

"We feel like Jews in the second world war." — Yugoslav cyclist Mico Brkovic reacting to the ban on his team's participation in the opening and closing parades and team events.

"My message is to keep your head up. You can live on." — US basketball star Magic Johnson advising fellow HIV sufferers.

"I'm afraid I think Mrs Thatcher's view of sport is that it is what the great unwashed do on a Saturday afternoon." — Bob Scott, chairman of the Manchester 2000 Olympic bid, when asked whether he enjoyed greater government backing now John Major had replaced Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister.

"We had a rock around the dock party. Fifty dozen cans of beer went down in two hours." — New Zealand yachting team manager Mike Clark.

"We are not in this sport because we like it or we want to earn our way through school. We're in it to make money." — US sprinter Leroy Burrell.

"I would have preferred to see Seve Ballesteros punch a flaming golf ball up there with a nine iron." — Opening ceremony spectator after an archer's arrow hit the Olympic flame.



German cyclists (L-R) Bernd Dittert, Christian Meyer, Uwe Peschel, and Michael Rich on the podium after receiving the gold medal in the 100km team race in Barcelona yesterday. —AFP photo

Germans pedal to team gold

MONTMELO, Spain, July 26: A united Germany on Sunday won the first cycling gold medal of the Summer Games, overcoming a powerful Italian squad in the men's 100-kilometre team time trial, reports AP.

The German team of Bernd Dittert, Christian Meyer, Uwe Peschel and Michael Rich was timed in two hours, one minute and 39 seconds on the Circuit de Catalunya course northeast of Barcelona.

The Germans, a united team in the Summer Olympics for the first time since the 1964 Tokyo Games, beat the favoured Italians by a full minute.

France took the bronze medal with 2:05:25. The demanding 100-kilometre (62-mile) course, unusual for a team time trial, which is normally raced on a

flat and straight road, took its toll. The Swedish team crashed and the Americans had two flats and a bike change in the first half of the race, ruining hopes of a top-five finish.

The Italians led by 14 seconds at the 50-kilometre mark. But the Germans forged ahead and held a six-second advantage three-quarters into the race.

The Italian team of Luca Colombo, Andrea Peron, Flavio Anastasia and Gianfranco Contri won last year's world championship in Stuttgart in 1:54:48, an incredible 2 1/2 minutes ahead of runner-up Germany. Three of the silver medalists raced for Germany on Sunday, avenging that defeat.

Sweden, the bronze medalist in Seoul and in fourth place here at 25 kilometers, withdrew after two cyclists crashed at the beginning of the second lap. Michael Andersson

and Johan Fagrell were admitted to Barcelona's Hospital del Mar with cuts and other injuries.

The team time trial was the first of 10 cycling events — including three for women — to be held during the next week. Racing resumes Monday with the men's kilometer time trial and the men's individual pursuit qualifying.

FINAL RESULTS

Final results Sunday for the men's team road cycling event at the Summer Olympics:

1. Germany (Bernd Dittert, Christian Meyer, Uwe Peschel, Michael Rich), 2 hours, 1 minute, 39.00 seconds.

2. Italy (Flavio Anastasia, Luca Colombo, Gianfranco Contri, Andrea Peron), 2:02:39.00.

3. France (Herve Boussard, Didier Faivre-Pierret, Philippe Gaumont, Jean-Louis Harel), 2:05:25.00.

Dream Team misses mark

BARCELONA, July 26: Charles Barkley scored 14 points to lead a 31-0 run, breaking a 7-7 tie and keying a 116-48 victory for the United States over Angola on Sunday in the Olympic basketball tournament, reports AP.

The 68-point margin was just four shy of the Olympic record, 72 points when the United States beat Thailand 101-29 in 1956.

And it could have been even more one-sided.

Angola actually led 2-1 and was then tied 7-7. Then Americans scored the next 31 points and 46 of 47 over the next 13 1/2 minutes.

In that span, Angola was 0-14 from 3-point range and 0-19 overall, its lone point a free throw by Herlander Coimbra after he was elbowed in the chest by Barkley on an intentional foul call.

Barkley led all scorers with 24 points. Karl Malone added 19 and Michael Jordan 10 while Magic Johnson had six points and 10 assists.

The US team, playing for the first time in the Olympics with NBA players, waltzed

through the Americas qualifying tournament in Portland with six victories by an average of 51.5 points. It nearly matched that in the first half, leading Angola by 48, 64-16.

Without even considering their advantage in physical talent, the Americans were taller than the Angolans by an average of 10 centimeters (4 inches) per man and outweigh them by 11 kilograms (25 pounds) across the board.

Almost from the start, the game was more of an exhibition than a competition, with the Americans putting on a show of running, jumping and shouting for the world and the live crowd.

The opposition will get tougher Monday night when the US team faces Croatia, a medal favourite with European star Toni Kukoc and Drazen Petrovic of the NBA's New Jersey Nets.

That game should be more of an indication of whether the Americans — a team of 11 NBA All-Stars and draft pick Christian Lactner — will ever be tested in these Olympics.

In the first half, the United States shot 62.2 percent from the field and had a 17-1 free throw advantage over Angola, which made 6 of 32 shots in the first half.

Anne's conspicuous absence

BARCELONA, July 26: Princess Anne may have endangered Manchester's Olympic bid by failing to turn up for the Barcelona Games opening ceremony, reports AP.

The Princess Royal was the talk of the International Olympic Committee on Sunday for what some members said could be seen as "a snub" at the IOC's Spanish president Juan Antonio Samaranch.

"Let's just say it was noticed at the top table," said one. They said the absence could rebound on the British city's hopes to stage the Olympics in the year 2000.

British Olympic Association officials refused to comment on the effect the absence of the Princess from the Montjuic Stadium could have.

According to the BOA, Queen Elizabeth II's eldest daughter had to wait for children Peter and Zara to arrive from Barcelona airport instead of going to Saturday's glittering spectacle where Samaranch took centre-stage in his home city.

Princess's private secretary added: "No snub was intended."

Thirty-two heads of state, including King Juan-Carlos of

Spain, major Western leaders like President Francois Mitterrand of France, and Cuban leader Fidel Castro, were present at the three hour



PRINCESS ANNE

The Princess took her children to the shooting contest on Sunday, apparently oblivious of the fuss, to see the Barcelona Olympics first gold medal won.

But one IOC member said: "What she did was risky for Manchester. They will choose the host for the 2000 Games in a year's time and every little incident counts."

"We are still waiting to see what Samaranch says. She has already annoyed him."

Litigation can be disastrous

BARCELONA, July 25: Athletes who take their international federations to court are likely to be banned from competing in their sport for life — even if they subsequently win the case they are disputing, reports AP.

Primo Nebiolo, president of the International Amateur Athletic Federation told AFP through a spokesman today.

IAAF president Primo Nebiolo said: "The day when athletes in any sport can try and overturn a ruling made by an international federation are coming to an end."

The International Olympic Committee, the international federations and the national Olympic committees will be forming a tripartite commission after the Olympics to study a formula to prevent athletes going to court.

"The principle in sport is that you take part voluntarily — no-one twists your arm to compete."

"Athletes in all sports will in future have to sign a document accepting the rules of the federation they are affiliated to."

"If that athlete subsequently challenges the authority of the federation in civil court, he will lose the right to compete in that sport, even if he was to win 20 million dollars damages in the subsequent court case."

Grandpa goes round the track

BARCELONA, July 26: US grandfather John Lucas has beaten the world's greatest athletes to his own piece of Olympic glory, running the 10,000 metres round the Barcelona track at the age of 65, reports Reuter.

Long before the international states pounded round the stadium, Lucas ran the course on Friday, just as he has done in every Olympics but one since 1960, organisers said today.

Lucas, a sports science professor at Pennsylvania State University, said the only Olympics he missed was in 1980 in Moscow, when Soviet authorities refused to let him use the track.

The United States and 61 other nations boycotted the Moscow Olympics in protest at the Russian intervention in Afghanistan. Lucas said his ambition was still to be running in the 21st century.

Romanian girls in the lead

BARCELONA, July 26: Romania and the favoured Unified Team set the scene for a gold medal duel and the United States got off to a solid start in Sunday's first round of women's compulsories at the Summer Olympics, reports AP.

With two sessions remaining, Romania held a minute lead over the nine-time Olympic champion Unified Team.

The United States, with its four remaining gymnasts competing later Sunday, stayed close to the pace with its top athletes — world champion Kim Zmeskal and Shannon Miller — going in the evening session.

The Americans' opening effort included a 9.825 by Wendy Bruce in the vault and a 9.812

by 15-year-old Dominique Dawes in the floor exercise. Dawes was in 10th place midway through compulsories and Bruce was 13th.

Romania, behind Gina Gogean, had 156,658 points midway through the compulsory round. The Unified Team had 156,645, with China third with 155,645 points.

Gogean had four scores above 9.80 with a high of 9.862 on floor. She was second overall with 39.349.

The Unified Team was led by Tattiana Lisenko, who was the top individual scorer from the first two sessions with 39.473 points.

Consistent throughout, Lisenko scored a 9.912 on the floor and nothing less than a 9.837 — on the balance beam — in the other three events.

Fourteen-year-old Roza Galieva and teammate Elena

Groundneva also performed well for the Unified Team, which is seeking its 10th women's gold medal in gymnastics since 1952.

Galieva, a 4-foot-5, 63-pounder from Uzbekistan, scored 39.274 points, while Groudneva, 18, had 39.249.

Galieva and Groudneva both scored 9.850s on the uneven bars, and Galieva had a 9.862 and scored 9.862 on floor. Groudneva scored 9.812 on beam and a 9.825 on bars.

Bomania, the runner-up to the Unified Team in three of the last four Olympics, also got solid performances from Vanda Hadarcan and Maria Neculita.

Neculita scored a 9.850 on the vault, while Hadarcan's best events were the vault, where she scored a 9.787 and on bars with a 9.850.

Statistical potrait of Olympians

BARCELONA, July 26: The heaviest Olympic squad? The shortest? Data released on opening day answered these crucial questions and sketch a statistical potrait of the typical Olympic athlete, reports AP.

Subject to last-minute change, 10,632 athletes have registered to compete in Barcelona, up from the record 9,581 four years ago in Seoul. The 7,600 men and 3,032 women hail from 171 countries.

The average Olympian is a 175-centimetre (5-foot-9), 77-kilogram (170 pound), 25-year old male or a 165-centimetre (5-foot-5), 61 kilogram (134-pound), 23-year-old female.

Track and field has by far the most entries: 1,935. But No. 2 might come as a surprise — rowing, with 697 competitors.

Three other water sports — swimming (668), yachting (516) and canoeing (498) — rank third, fourth and sixth, respectively. There are 503

cyclists. The smallest fields are in two single-sex sports — 81 men in the modern pentathlon and 53 women in synchronized swimming.

The largest team, numerically, is the United States, with 607 athletes, including 216 women. Next is host Spain (527), followed by Germany (517), the Unified Team of former Soviet republics (501) and Britain (404).

Monaco, which covers barely a 1.3-square-kilometres (one-half square-mile), appropriately has the smallest team — two.

Among the teams with more than 200 athletes, the Netherlands and Germany share honours for having the largest squads in the physical sense.

The Dutch have the tallest men, averaging almost 183 centimetres (6 feet), and the heaviest women, averaging 67 kilograms (148 pounds). The German men top the weight category at an average 82 kilograms (181 pounds).

The Japanese are the shortest and lightest of the major teams — men averaging

175-centimetre (5-foot-9) and 77.5 kilograms (171 pounds), and women averaging 162.5 centimetres (5-foot-4) and 55 kilograms (121 pounds).

Basketball players, male and female, predictably rank as the tallest groups of athletes, and also as the heaviest. The typical male hoopster is 198 centimetres (6-foot-6).

Gymnasts of both sexes are the shortest and lightest — the women average barely 155 centimetres (5-foot-1).

The equestrian events feature the oldest athletes — men averaging 33 and women 32. At the other end of the age scale, women gymnasts average 16.

The most youthful male athletes are the soccer players, with an average age of 20 but that's because the Olympic tournament is limited to those 22 or younger.

France has the oldest group of men among the 200-plus delegations, averaging 27, while Korea has the youngest average at 22. Among women, the average age for Americans and Swedes is 26, and 21 for Japan, China and Czechoslovakia.

Medals today, results tomorrow

BARCELONA, July 26: Medals will be handed out as usual immediately after the end of competition each day in weightlifting's ten Olympic Games divisions, but no-one will treat the results as final until two days afterwards, reports AP.

The scoreboard totals will only be written in the record books if nothing is said at the International Olympic Committee's morning press conference that day about a positive drugs test in weightlifting.

The lifting will no doubt be as spectacular and dramatic as at previous Olympics, but what everyone will be waiting to see is whether weightlifting has succeeded in cleaning up its act.

Tamas Ajan, secretary general of the International Weightlifting Federation, boasted here: "I'm sure the Olympic weightlifting tournament will be clean."

But his federation's previous efforts to crack down on steroids, which build up strength, and diuretics, which reduce body weight, have met with singularly little success.

After various incidents at the Montreal and Los Angeles Games, including the disqualification of two gold medalists in 1976, the sport's notoriety reached its peak in Seoul with four disqualifications for drugs at the Seoul Games, including two gold and one silver medalist.

If Ajan is right, however, Alexander Kurlovich could complete the sport's rehabilitation as well as his own by retaining the super heavyweight (over 110 kg) title on August 4.

The burly 30-year-old from Grodno, Belarus, was banned for two years in 1984 after being caught at Montreal airport trying to import steroids in a suitcase.

Though he bounced back to win the gold in Seoul, the positive tests there tainted his claim not to use drugs himself.

But Kurlovich has continued to do well — and give negative dope tests — and is favourite to lift the greatest total weight in the Olympic event after regaining the World Championship last year.

Kurlovich's main challenger could be fellow Belorussian Leonid Taranenko, the Moscow Olympic gold medalist. The 1990 world champion who claims he was left out of the Soviet squad for Seoul because of outspokenness.

While the Belorussian pair seem to have survived the political upheavals, and an unexpected decision that the CIS National Championships should not be considered a qualifying event, other former Soviet lifters have not been so lucky and it is hard to assess the Unified Team's overall medal potential.

The same could be said of the Bulgarian, who retained two gold medals in Seoul despite counting both the disqualified gold medalists in its team.

Two years later, Suleymanoglu changed his name from the Bulgarian Suleimanov and became a Turk.

He was an outspoken critic of the Bulgarian government's treatment of the Turkish minority in his homeland. And when the Bulgarian weightlifting team went to a training camp at Melbourne, Australia, in 1986, he slipped away from the group while pretending to visit the men's room at a hotel.

Suleymanoglu hid in Australia for several days before he went to the Turkish consulate to seek asylum. Eventually the Bulgarians allowed him to switch nationalities and when he arrived in Turkey, he was given a hero's welcome as he kissed the airport tarmac.

He went to the Games at Seoul as a Turk and twice broke the world record on the way to winning the gold medal.

At Seoul, he had the fans gasping in admiration as he made new marks of 152.5 kilograms (336 pounds) in the snatch and 190 (418 3-4 pounds) in the clean and jerk.

He broke the world record in the snatch with his second and third lifts and his total of 342.5 kilograms (755 pounds) was 30 kilograms (66 pounds) better than the lifts by silver medalist Bulgarian Stefan Topurov.

Since he started competing

Khoka leaves for Barcelona today

Sports Reporter
State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadeq Hossain Khoka, who is also the chief de mission of the Bangladesh Olympic squad, leaves Dhaka today to join the team in Barcelona.

Sadeq Hossain could not accompany the Bangladesh contingent which left on July 21 due to his preoccupation with the on-going budget session of parliament.

Smoke-free Games goes up in smoke

BARCELONA, July 26: Olympic organisers' hopes of making the Barcelona Games smoke-free have been reduced to ashes less than 24 hours after the official opening, reports AP.

Trampled butts litter the walkways around the stadiums and potted trees specially brought in to brighten up the buildings risk being submerged as the hard-smoking Spaniards use the pots as giant ashtrays.

Even at the opening ceremony the bright red glow of freshly-lighted cigarettes lit up the darkness.

Hundreds of spectators ignored a request to sit through the three-hour long spectacular without a quick puff.

The organisers admit privately that the agreement signed in 1989 between the Spanish government and the World Health Organisation-Europe to make Barcelona '92 the "Smoke-free Games" was unrealistic.

"It would be easier to beat the American basketball team than stop Spaniards from smoking," admitted an official.

"No smoking throughout the Olympics is a good idea, but it was never going to work."

Meanwhile the Spaniards continue to puff away as the campaign to stop them goes quietly up in smoke.

Cuba set pace for a baseball gold

BARCELONA, July 26: Cuba, the amateur world baseball champions, hammered the Dominican Republic on Sunday, 8-0, in a victory they hope sets the pace for a gold medal, reports AP.

Their only apparent competition, the United States, was set to play Spain later Sunday.

"The United States — or Spain or Italy — I'll play anyone," said centrefielder Victor Mesa, who homered and knocked in three runs. "We want to win here."

After three scoreless innings, Cuba exploded.

Mesa sandwiched his home run between doubles by Orestes Kindelan and Ermidilio Urrutia.

Olympics of the peacekeepers

PHNOM PENH, July 26: The world's largest UN peacekeeping force staged its own version of the world's largest Games today, as soldiers from dozens of nations competed in a mini-Olympics, reports AP.

The Games, organised by the Australian battalion at the capital's own run-down national sports complex, included soccer, basketball, tug-of-war and running races.

The winners of each sport were challenged to play Cambodia's own budding national teams at an unspecified date in the future. UN spokesman Eric Falt said.

Smallest champion but biggest name

BARCELONA, July 26: Only 152 centimetres (5 feet) tall, yet with the strength to lift three times his weight, the man known as Pocket Hercules feels the strain as he puts his Olympic title on the line.

Naim Suleymanoglu won the featherweight (62-kilogram, 132-pound) gold four years ago in Seoul after a daring nationality switch from Bulgarian to Turk, reports AP.

But the power-packed lifter was upset at this year's European championships, when he returned from a back injury to finish only second.

The 10-day tournament starts Sunday with the lightest category, the flyweights (52 kilograms, 114.6 pounds) and Suleymanoglu will be in action Tuesday when the featherweights step onto the mat.

He may be the smallest champion, but he is the biggest name. The only other defending champion is super heavyweight (unlimited) Aleksandr Kurlovich, now competing for the Unified Team rather than the Soviet Union.

"I want to break one more record, in the Olympics," Suleymanoglu said. "I am like a rich man who is never full of money. I feel I can do it. I want to give that to the people, and

then I want to turn the page. I don't know if that will be enough. It seems the people's wishes never stop."

Suleymanoglu missed the 1984 Games at Los Angeles

because of a Soviet-led boycott. Although only 16, he was the world record holder and favourite to win the bantamweight (56-kilogram, 123-pound) gold until the Bulgarians joined the Eastern bloc pullout. Instead, the gold medal went to china's Wu Shude.



NAIM SULEYMANOGLU