

Not all of them are Americans

BARCELONA, July 27: Not all the best basketball players at the Olympics are wearing red, white and blue, reports AP.

The world discovered the US pastime years ago. It beat college players with such frequency that the US team finally allowed professionals from the National Basketball Association — far and away the best league in the world to play.

They will encounter talented practitioners of the sport from other lands, some of whom have played in the NBA.

Start with Monday's game against Croatia, a team that includes Drazen Petrovic of the New Jersey Nets, Toni Kukoc, a first-round draft choice of the Chicago Bulls, and Dino Radja, who chose a \$3 million deal in Italy instead of an offer from the Boston Celtics.

The Croats intrigue the Americans. Of particular interest is the 2.09 metre Kukoc, a power forward-sized point guard in the tradition of Magic Johnson — quick and slick.

"I hear he's the real deal," says Michael Jordan.

Then there's Lithuania, armed with Sarunas Marculionis of the Golden State Warriors and 2.23 metre Arvidas Sabonis, draft property of the Portland Trail Blazers.

Germany has Detlef Schrempf of the Indiana Pacers. Ex-Atlanta Hawk Alex Volkov is with the Unified Team. Brazil's Oscar Schmidt can shoot with the best of them.

US coach Chuck Daly, rarely an optimist, concedes his team is too strong to be beaten. "Thus far we haven't addressed a close game," he said.

SAASF meet held in Colombo

The seven executive committee meeting of the South Asian Airlines Sports Federation (SAASF) was held in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo Sunday with its president Raisuddin Ahmed in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting, participated by the airlines representatives from the SAARC member countries, held detailed discussion on the agenda which included progress of holding of cricket, table tennis and chess tournaments as scheduled earlier in the SAASF sports calendar for the year.

The meeting took some certain decisions in this regard.

Raisuddin Ahmed, who is also the vice-president of Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB), discussed with the Sri Lankan Cricket Board officials the possibilities of the Sri Lankan Test team's visit to Bangladesh and matters of mutual interest, including the coming Asia Cup to be held in October this year, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.



OLYMPIC SPECIAL



Thompson traumatised by losses

BARCELONA, July 27: Jenny Thompson walked slowly, no smile on her face or spring in her step. She shuffled to the medals stand. She trudged away to talk about her shattered hopes and broken heart, reports AP.



Anita Nall of the United States in action during the morning heats of the women's 200m breaststroke Monday.

So far, she hasn't swum fast enough or flashed her grin as quickly as is her habit. The count so far: two events, one silver medal, no satisfaction.

Barcelona was to be a bonanza for the tall, tough-minded 19-year-old, who was the world's best this year in the freestyle sprints. Five Olympic medals — most if not all of them gold — were possible.

Meeting with reporters Monday, she was reduced to facing questions like: Must you win the 50-meter freestyle Friday to consider your Olympics a success? "Yeah," she said reluctantly, "I think so."

In the 100 freestyle, she set the world record four months ago. On Sunday morning she set an Olympic record in the preliminaries. On Sunday night, though, she was runner-up in the finals to a swimmer whose previous best time was a substantial 64-hundredths of a second slower than hers.

In the 200, Thompson had the second best time in the world this year. On Monday, she had the 12th best time in the preliminaries and, shock-

ingly, failed to qualify for the finals. "My favourite event is the 50 because it's so short and fast," Thompson said. "The front part of my races have been good. It's just the back half that's been hurting, so my 50 looks good."

But, she said, "I think I'm past the hard part of the meet" emotionally. "I have two relays, which are really fun, and I think we're going to do really well in those," she added.

She's expected to swim the 100-metre anchor legs in the 400 freestyle relay Tuesday and the 400 medley relay Thursday. She bypassed the 200 consolation final Monday night to rest for Tuesday's race.

In the 100, she may have spent herself too much in the preliminaries. In the finals, she trailed Zhuang Yong of China by eight-hundredths of a second after 50 meters. Then she had to chase Zhuang, instead of swimming her own race.

In the 200, intent on making up for Sunday's shortfall, she used her legs too much early and had too little energy on the fourth and final lap.

"I was just really physically and emotionally tired still from the 100," Thompson said.

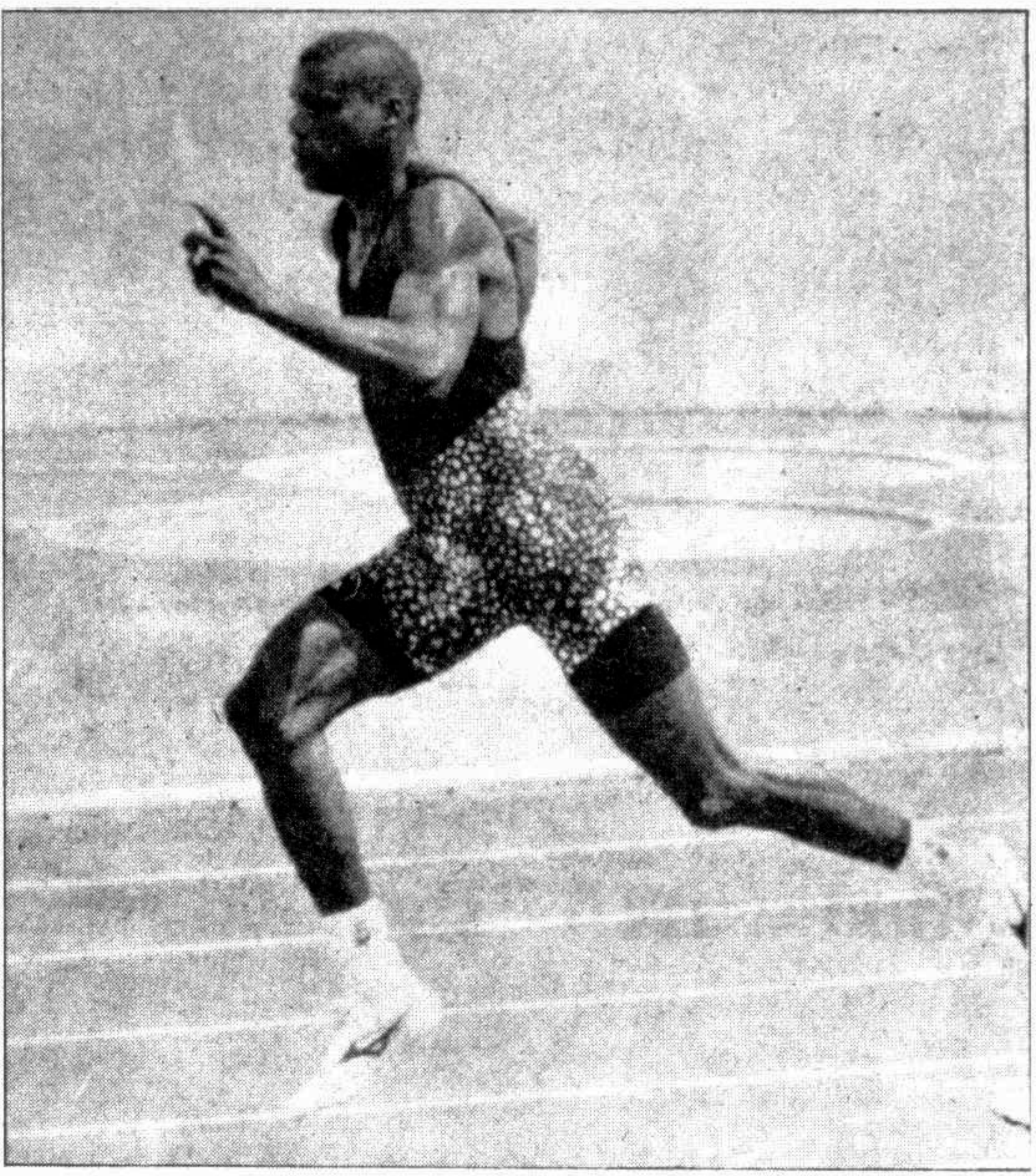
Even though she won a medal in the 100, she said that was a greater disappointment than missing the finals in the 200, her weakest event.

As she stood on the medals stand with a sparkling silver cap on her head and a silver medal on her chest, her blank stare hinted at her emotions as she heard the Chinese national anthem.

"I was just probably mad at myself," Thompson said Monday. "I thought I should be on the top but I blew it. But, I mean, a silver medal in the Olympics isn't bad and so I shouldn't gripe."

"I should be happy and so I am happy."

The words came slowly and the smile was nowhere in sight.



Carl Lewis carries a baton as he practises with the US 4x100m relay team in Barcelona on Monday.

Lewis may yet run relay

BARCELONA, July 27: Even if coach Mel Rosen will not say for certain, it appears Carl Lewis will run on the United States' 400-metre relay team at the Olympics, reports AP.

"I'm sure Carl Lewis will be on the relay," Dennis Mitchell, the US 100-metre champion and sprint team captain, said today.

Mitchell said Rosen "is doing everything in his power to get Carl on."

Rosen has insisted he plans to use the first four finishers in the 100 metres at last month's Olympic trials as the relay team in all three rounds — the quarterfinals, semifinals and final — if all four are healthy and show fitness during the Games. That foursome is Mitchell, Mark Witherspoon, Leroy Burrell and Mike Marsh.

top four, he'll have a chance to run," Rosen said of Lewis. "Right now, he's not listed to run a leg."

However, Mitchell thinks that Lewis will at least run one round. Lewis was sixth at the trials in the 100, plus fourth in the 200 metres. Disappointed and dejected at his subpar performances, he did not immediately sign up for the relay team, for which he qualified as an alternate. Instead, he waited until three days later, Rosen said.

Lewis' late decision and presence have created some disruptions in the 400 relay, just like the addition of Michael Johnson, the national 200-metre champion, to the 1,600-metre relay team has caused problems on that unit.

Reportedly, there was much shouting, yelling and screaming between athletes and coaches during Sunday's

1,600-metre relay practice, with the athletes demanding to know who would run the final. Finally, they were told it would be Danny Everett, Quincy Watts, Johnson and Steve Lewis.

Still, Rosen would not confirm it, claiming the decision would not be made until Aug 3, two days before the start of the relays.

"They're being very vocal," is all Rosen would say of the fuss.

"It's a war of egos, the athletes' egos, of who's supposed to run which round. Nobody wants to run the rounds," he said.

Mitchell indicated the 1,600-metre relay controversy was hotter than Rosen would admit.

Asked if the 400 relay team had a similar commotion, he said, "Ours was not a knock-em-down, drag-out affair."

Fined for flashing

BARCELONA, July 27: Two Chinese women gymnasts have been sanctioned at the Olympic tournament here for flashing too much thigh.

China were deducted 0.2 point by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) for "incorrect dress" during the women's team compulsory exercises on Sunday.

But the decision did not impress Zhang Quande, China's representative on the FIG executive committee.

Powell goes missing

A MERICAN long jumper Mike Powell, the world record holder and world champion, on Sunday joined the list of missing Olympic athletes.

After Canada admitted that it had lost Ben Johnson, now either hiding in a Barcelona hotel or training in Lisbon, the US Olympic Committee confessed that Powell had also not been in touch.

"We just don't know where he is," said a USOC spokesman.

According to officials who helped organise a US training camp in south west France, Powell left Narbonne last Wednesday but he told them he would return this Tuesday.

He must register with the Olympic Village 48 hours before his event.

Powell, who will be challenged by fellow-American Carl Lewis for the gold, starts his campaign on August 5.

Full house

MORE than 150,000 spectators watched events on the first full day of the Olympic programme, organisers said today.

Pedro Palacios, spokesman for the Organising Committee, said 154,400 people watched the 14 sports which included boxing, swimming, basketball, soccer and weightlifting.

Stooping low

THE president of Panama's Olympic Committee was caught selling tickets outside the main stadium this weekend, Spanish police said on Monday.

They said they seized 300 tickets on Sunday for a variety of events from Milton Sanchez Ribas, who insisted he was selling them at face value. They said it was not an arrestable offence.

"It's very surprising indeed, considering his position," a police spokesman said.

A spokeswoman for the Organising Committee COOB'92 said the International Olympic Committee had been informed and would decide on what action to take.

Police said they have seized more than 3000 Barcelona Games tickets in the past week from organised touts who are selling them at many times their official cost.

Free check-up

THE Olympic team from Yemen were obviously impressed by medical facilities at the athletes Village — all 31 of them made a bee-line to the clinic for a check-up.

A hundred doctors, nurses and ancillary staff man the medical centre to look after the 15,000 competitors and officials staying in the Village. Facilities include everything from dentistry to chiropody.

Officials said today the clinic was handling an average of 250 cases a day, mainly for minor injuries. The entire Yemen team marched in for a check-up the day after arriving last week. Serious cases are transferred from the clinic to the nearby Hospital Del Mar, a new building overlooking the Mediterranean with some of the best medical care in Spain.

Afghans absent

AFGHANISTAN, still torn by violence after 14 years of civil war, has been unable to send competitors to the Barcelona Olympics, officials said on Monday.

Michele Verdier, spokeswoman for the International Olympic Committee, denied Afghanistan was boycotting the Games but said it was represented only by the Secretary, General of its Olympic Committee, who marched in the opening parade.

Afghanistan is using its right of presence rather than its right of participation, Verdier told a news conference.

The man who fired the arrow

BARCELONA, July 27: As the flame-tipped arrow sliced through the night air, the 70,000 spectators in Barcelona's Olympic Stadium held their breath, unsure if it could really reach its target 70 meters above, reports AFP.

It did, and the huge torch mounted on the side of the stadium burst into flame, the final signal that the Barcelona Games were well and truly underway.

Yet few knew that the man who fired the crucial arrow, Spaniard Antonio Rebollo, achieved his archery skills despite suffering from polio.

packed with Spanish Olympians past and present, Rebollo was one of the few who earned his sporting credentials in the Paralympics, the official Olympics for the disabled.

He won an archery silver in the 1984 Paralympics in Los Angeles and bronze in Seoul. In addition, he won a gold medal in the 1988 European Championships for the disabled and a silver in 1991.

Rebollo was one of two candidates for the honour of lighting the torch, and neither knew until the last minute which it would be. Organisers thought they would both stay calmer that way.

Despite his disability, Rebollo could not have achieved the perfect shot without outstanding strength.

The arrow was 1.2m long and weighed nearly 100 grams (3.5 oz). The bow used was made of hardwood, laminated and in one piece, so that it barely bent when Rebollo drew back the string.

It took a second and a half for the arrow to pass through its 70-metre trajectory, and as it curved over the lip of the torch, the flame was ignited and as it burst into life amid gasps of disbelief in the stadium, so did the 1992 Olympics.

The demanding 100 kilometre course took its toll. Sweden, the bronze medalist in Seoul and in fourth place here at 25 kilometres, withdrew after Michael Andersson and Johan Fagrell crashed on the second lap and were admitted to Barcelona's Hospital del Mar with cuts and other injuries.

Germany had lost to the Italian team of Luca Colombo, Andrea Peron, Flavio Anastasia and Gianfranco Conti at last year's world championships by a sizeable 2 minutes.

United Germany showed why one team is better than two. It overcame a powerful

Ghana off to a bright start

BARCELONA, July 27: Highly rated Ghana, the under-17 world champions, started their Olympic soccer campaign with a flattering 3-1 win over Australia on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Denmark, whose senior team ignited the nation with their European Championship triumph last month, drew 1-1 with Mexico in the other Group D match, of Zaragoza.

Danish captain Claus Thompson scored with a fine 87th minute header to counter a first half penalty from Francisco Rottian.

Two late goals from alert striker Kwame Ayew took the pressure off Ghana who were struggling to hold on to a 1-0

lead. Fast breaks led to both goals and Australian goalkeeper John Pian was at fault with the first allowing a tame shot to bounce over him.

Torino's Mohammed Gargo had given Ghana a good start, scoring with a long range effort in the 12th minute.

Tony Vidmar grabbed a consolation goal for Australia in injury time.

In Barcelona, Sweden, fielding one of the most experienced teams in the competition, failed to impress when held 0-0 by Paraguay in Group C.

The Swedes' three full internationals who played in the European Championship finals, Italy based Tomas Brodin, Joachim Bjorklund and Patrik

Andersson looked jaded from a tough season and did little of note.

Paraguay, who qualified from South America on goal difference ahead of Brazil, more than coped with their European opponents and Andres Duarte squandered the best chance of the game when he fired straight at goalkeeper Jan Ekholm when clean through.

South Korea and Morocco drew 1-1 in the other Group C encounter, of Valencia.

A fine individual goal from substitute Ahmed Bahja gave Morocco the lead in the 67th minute before Chung Jae Know equalised with a spectacular scissor kick from just inside the penalty area in 75th.

Watt catches them napping

SANT SADURNI D'ANOIA, Spain, July 27: Pre-race favourites got caught in the pack and watched in dismay as Kathryn Watt of Australia broke away on the final lap and won a gold medal in the women's 81-kilometre race, reports AP.

In the other cycling medal race Sunday, Bernd Dittert, Uwe Peschel, Christian Meyer and Michael Rich teamed up to give a united Germany a gold medal in a 100-kilometre race.

The four were timed in 2:01:39, beating the favoured Italians by a full minute. France took the bronze.

Watt described her victory this way: "I was in a bunch... I don't like to be a conformist, so I attacked."

Rival Inga Thompson of the United States said that was key. "I guess I called it when I said someone really strong but unknown could get away and win it," she said.

"This is the type of course that if you're good and you're marked, you can't really get

away unless you're really, really lucky," Thompson added.

Pre-race favourite Jeannie Longo of France was 20 seconds behind Watt for the silver. Monique Knol of the Netherlands took the bronze.

Despite the setbacks, US racers are hoping for their best showing, aside from the boycotted 1984 games. Connie Paraskevini-Young's bronze in the women's match sprint was their only medal four years ago at Seoul.

Erin Hartwell is a medal contender in Monday's men's time trials. There are eight more medal sets to be won over the next week.

Thompson, who was knocked from her bike in a tight turn on the third lap, is a challenger along with Geanne Golay, and Sally Zack.

Golay finished sixth, Zack, 10th, and Thompson 26th. It was Australia's first gold cycling medal in the event and its first overall since the 1984 men's 4,000-metre team pursuit title.

United Germany showed why one team is better than two. It overcame a powerful



French cyclist Jeannie Longo (L, silver), Australian Kathryn Watt (C, gold) and Dutchwoman Monique Knol raise flowers on the podium after the women's individual race Sunday in Barcelona. —AFP photo

Ondiekis trying for an Olympic first

BARCELONA, July 27: For Olympic gold medal favourites Lisa and Yobes Ondiekis, there is more to a long-running relationship than long-distance running, reports AP.

"Yes, there's her cooking," Yobes, the 1991 world 5,000-metre champion, said Sunday. "She cooks very well. She cooks, takes care of the laundry and looks after Emma (their daughter born in October 1990)."

Lisa, the 1988 Olympic silver medalist in the women's marathon, looks to her husband for coaching and relaxation. Since the two met at the Seoul Games, Lisa has reduced her times dramatically with her husband's help, and learned to take time off.

She now rests for four to eight weeks following the outdoor season instead of running continuously and burning herself out, something she did in the past.

they would be the first married runners to earn gold medals in the same Olympics.

Two married couples have won Olympic gold in the same year, but not both in running events.

Czechoslovakians Emil Zatopek — 5,000, 10,000 metres and marathon — and Dana Zatopkova — javelin — did it in 1952. Harold Connolly of the United States and Olga Fikotova of Czechoslovakia did it four years later in the hammer throw and women's discus.

Also after double gold will be two American married couples — David Patrick and Sandra Farmer-Patrick in the men's and women's 400-metre intermediate hurdles; and Aaron Ramirez and Shelly Steely in the men's 10,000 metres and the women's 3,000, respectively.

Of those four, only Sandra Farmer-Patrick is favoured.

and laid back."

The toughest part for Ramirez and Steely isn't the training, but the racing.

"It seems like her races are always just before the men's 10,000 metres, so I'm always on the warmup field trying to peek over the fence to see how she's doing," Ramirez has said.

The Ondiekis' biggest difficulties involve getting Lisa to adjust to training harder and thinking like a Kenyan distance runner.

"I'm running a whole lot faster than I've ever run," said Lisa, who proved it last month in Helsinki, Finland, by clipping more than one minute off her previous best for 10,000 metres on the track.

"My training and my thinking has changed dramatically since Yobes has been coaching me. His expectations are high, and they're hard to meet. "I've tried to think more the way Yobes thinks, not only in training, but in races. If you make the team in Kenya, you are one of the best in the world. That's automatic. To be the best in Australia, you have

to be good, but it's not the same," she said.

Yobes tries not to take the credit for his wife's remarkable improvement and newfound confidence.

"I don't like to say I'm her coach," he said. "I'm her husband and adviser. A coach would be on her all the time telling her what to do. I'm more of a family member than a coach."

Semantics aside, Yobes' influence has been a major boost for Lisa's ego. Uncertain about her ability, she generally went into a race with much trepidation. Now, she is extremely confident.

"Although I ran well, I never came close to a world record," Lisa said. "Yobes said I was running too slow."

To increase her speed, Yobes made her do repetitions — 50 or 60 200s — while also allowing Lisa to run her customary 140 miles (224 kilometres) per week. Yobes, whose 13:03.58 clocking for 5,000 meters is the fastest in the world this year, is a frontrunner.