

Tennis top guns win through

BARCELONA, July 28: Boris Becker won an Olympic marathon, reports AP.

The tenacious German could have run 42 kilometers (26 miles) in less time than it took him to beat little-known Christian Ruud of Norway Tuesday in the opening center-court match of the Barcelona Games.

The score: 3-6, 7-6 (7-2), 5-7, 7-6 (7-2), 6-3. On a hot, cloudless day, Becker needed 4 hours, 50 minutes to reach the finish.

"I have to play better to win a medal," Becker said. "But one good thing is I can last four or five hours, and that's important on clay."

His countrywoman, top seed and 1988 gold medalist Steffi Graf, had a much easier time in beating Lupita Novelo of Mexico, 6-1, 6-1. Fourth-seeded Mary Joe Fernandez swept Li Chen of China, 6-2, 6-3.

In other men's play on Barcelona's red clay, top-ranked Jim Courier beat Ramesh Krishnan of India 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4, while fourth-seeded Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia survived a comeback by Bernardo Mota of Portugal, 6-2, 6-2, 6-7 (5-7), 4-6, 6-3.

Also, seventh-seeded Guy Forget of France swept Cristiano Caratti of Italy, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2, and ninth-seeded Wayne Ferreira beat countryman Christo Van Rensburg of South Africa, 7-5, 6-2, 2-6, 6-4.

The 19-year-old Ruud, ranked No. 312, had only one previous victory this year, and that came in a challenger match. But in his Olympic debut, Ruud was as cool as Norway and more consistent than Becker from the baseline.

"It was my first match on such a big court," Ruud said. "It was fun, except for the heat."

A thermometer on center court registered the temperature at 42 degrees Celsius (108F).

ZUBERO'S GOLD

BARCELONA, July 28: Martin Zubero of hosts Spain set an Olympic record of 1:58.47 to win the gold in the 200-metre backstroke Tuesday.

Vladimir Selkov of the Unified Team won the silver in 1:58.87. Stefano Battistelli of Italy got the bronze in 1:59.40, reports AP.

US coach under fire

BARCELONA, July 28: Mel Rosen, men's coach of the US Olympic track and field team, was called a liar and unprofessional on Tuesday by two members of the 1,600-metre relay team, reports AP.

The runners, Steve Lewis and Danny Everett, both blasted Rosen for including Michael Johnson on the relay team, ahead of Andrew Valmon, the fourth-place finisher in the 400 metres at last month's Olympic trials.

"Mel Rosen is unprofessional, inconsistent and has not been truthful to Andrew Valmon," Lewis, the 1988 Olympic 400-metre gold medalist, said at a press conference.

"I will run, but I don't agree with what's going on."

Everett, the 1988 Olympic bronze medalist and 1992 Olympic trials champion, echoed Lewis, his Santa Monica Track Club teammate.

"I think the coach has mishandled the situation very seriously," he said. "I've lost all respect for Mel. He also has been inconsistent in the way he has handled the relays in the past."

"Mel has changed his philosophy. He's been lying to a lot of people," said Everett, who also revealed that he had an injured right Achilles tendon and might have to withdraw from the Games.

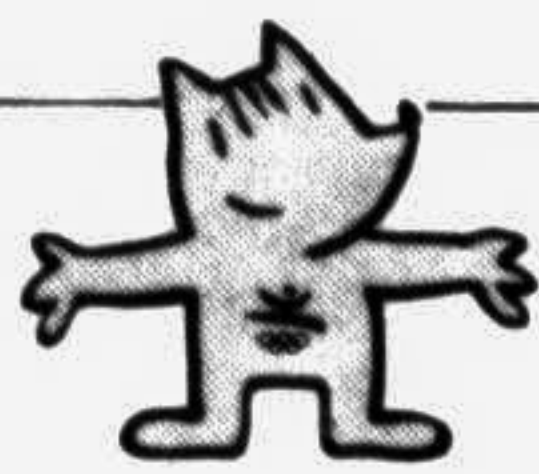
Rosen was not immediately available for comment.

Everett also charged that Rosen's and Johnson's affiliation with the shoe company Nike also played a part in the coach's decision to give Johnson a place on the relay team.

"It's a conflict of interest when you have a coach who is with a shoe company trying to get an athlete on the team from that company," he said.

Johnson, who won the 200 at the trials but did not run the 400, was given the opening to become a part of the relay team last December when The Athletics Congress, the governing body for track and field in the United States, passed a rule allowing anyone in the trials — regardless of event — to compete in the 1,600.

The regulation was passed only a couple of months after the US team was upset by Britain in the 1,600-metre relay at the world championships in Tokyo. Many observers, including several US coaches, thought the team would have won if Johnson had run the anchor leg instead of Antonio Pettigrew, the 400-metre world champion, who was overtaken by Britain's Kris Akabusi.



OLYMPIC SPECIAL



Fu Mingxia of China on way to winning the women's 10m platform diving gold in Barcelona Monday.

Hase ends Evans' winning streak

BARCELONA, July 28: Dagmar Hase of Germany made up nearly a one-second deficit in the final 50 metres to upset world record-holder Janet Evans of the United States by .21 on Tuesday to win the women's 400-metre freestyle swimming event at the Olympics, reports AP.

Evans controlled the pace of the grueling race until the final stretch, metres, making the turn with a .92-second lead over Hase.

But Hase came on strong toward the finish and won in 4:07.18. Evans won the silver in 4:07.39 — well off the world record of 4:03.85 she set in winning at the 1988 Olympics.

The bronze medal went to Hayley Lewis of Australia in 4:11.22.

Erika Hansen of the United States was fourth in 4:11.50.

Hase showed the former East German sports powerhouse remains strong two years after Olympic record of 1 minute, 00.85 seconds to shave one-hundredth of a second off the mark set by Rica Reinisch of

stroke, world record-holder and crowd favourite Martin Zubero of Spain led all qualifiers in 1:59.22.

LATEST: Popov is first but Biondi fourth

BARCELONA, July 28: Alexandre Popov of the Unified Team won the 100-metre freestyle gold Tuesday in 49.02.

Stephan Caron of France got the silver in 49.50. Jon Olsen won the bronze in 49.51.02 of a second faster than American teammate world record holder Matt Biondi, who tied for fourth, reports AP.

the Berlin Wall came down. Evans defeated a pair of East Germans to win the 400 and 800 freestyle golds in Seoul.

The 20-year-old Evans had not lost a 400 freestyle since the 1986 Goodwill Games, including an 18-race victory streak.

In the women's 100 backstroke qualifying, Kristina Egerszegi of Hungary set an

Germany in the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Egerszegi, who holds the world record of 1:00.31 in the 100 backstroke, already has one gold medal at these Olympics. She won the 400 individual medley Sunday.

Lea Lovelless of the United States, qualified second behind Egerszegi in 1:01.19.

In the men's 200 back-

Morales' most memorable day

BARCELONA, July 28: Fourteen-year-old Kyoko Iwasaki of Japan became the youngest swimming champion in Olympic history and a CIS men's relay squad set the first world record of the Games in a dramatic day in the pool on Monday, reports Reuters.

Iwasaki upstaged American world record holder Anita Nall, with whom she shared a birthday last Tuesday, to grab an unexpected gold medal in the women's 200 metres breaststroke.

At 14 years and six days, Iwasaki captured her title at a younger age than Hungary's Krisztina Egerszegi, who was 14 years one month and nine days old when she won the 200 backstroke in Seoul in 1988.

SADOVYI'S SECOND

Shaven-headed Evgeny Sadoviy, who missed a world mark by one-hundredth of a second in the 200 freestyle on Sunday grabbed a share of his first world record and a second title in the 4x200 freestyle relay.

Sadoviy swam a super anchor leg to drive the CIS home in two minutes 11.95 seconds inside the 7:12.51 mark set by the United States in Seoul.

Dmitry Lepikov, Vladimir Pychenko and Veniamin Taniovich shared the triumph.

American veteran Pablo Morales, a gold medalist at the 1984 Los Angeles Games, came back eight years later to win the men's 100 metres butterfly gold. He burst into tears after his victory.

DARNYI'S FEAT

Hungary's Tamas Darnyi became the first man to retain the Olympic 400 metres individual medley crown, leaving his rivals trailing yet again as he has since 1985.

Nall, who broke the world record twice in one day at the US Olympic trials in March, stormed away in the 200 breaststroke. But the 16-year-old American ran out of steam on the final length and Iwasaki and China's Lin Li surged in front.

"It has not sunk in yet that I got the gold medal. I was very

happy when Anita Nall came over and said congratulations," Iwasaki said.

"I cried a lot. It was so incredible to get the gold."

Tears flowed at the pool, with Morales — the elder statesman of the US team — also overcome by the emotion of victory.

Morales, who failed to make

the medals ceremony.

"At this point I'm retired," he said.

"Happy yes. Sad, yes. I have worked really hard for 14 years and I think it's time to move on."

Nesty said he had done his best and had no regrets.

"I'm not disappointed," he said. "I gave it my best shot. I'm pretty relaxed. I just ran out of room on the last 10 metres."

Detailing his life in the tiny former Dutch colony after Seoul, Nesty said he had had a sports stadium, airplane, coin and a stamp named after him.

"Unfortunately the plane crashed," he said, before quickly adding, "That's not funny."

HAISETT'S REVENGE

Haislett, denied a bronze medal by Van Almsick in Sunday's 100 freestyle, gained revenge in the 200 when she powered past the pace-setting German in the dying moments of the race.

"It's incredible. I came here and wanted to win but it does not seem real," Haislett, reigning world 100 freestyle Champion, said.

"Yesterday was a big disappointment but I knew I had to get over it to perform well today."

Van Almsick, "swimming in her first major championships," said. "The pressure was too great."

Iwasaki broke the four-year-old Olympic record of East German Silke Hoerner by 0.06 seconds in 2:26.65, while Darnyi was also inside his own Olympic mark when he touched in the 400 individual medley in 4:14.23.

"I have to work much harder now to stay at the top," said Darnyi, unbeaten in the individual medley in all the major championships he has entered since 1985.

"It is quite hard to carry on but I have got used to it in the last four or five years. If things go well like this I would like to keep swimming until the next Olympics in Atlanta. Why should I stop?"

The CIS team of Russians were disappointed they could not hear their own anthem at the victory ceremony. "It should have been the Russian anthem," Taniovich said.

"The team knew they could do it so they set a world record pace. There was a lot of nervousness before the race," Sadoviy said



PABLO MORALES, too moved to speak

He phoned home from a phone booth, then wept unashamedly on teammate Jeff Rouse's shoulder.

The 27-year-old American broke down in tears shortly after the victory ceremony and was in no state to attend a formal news conference.

"I am so lucky. I have been

Poland's Rafal Szukala to win in 53.32 seconds.

NESTY RETIRES

Third-placed Nesty, a national hero in his native Surinam after winning his country's first Olympic medal in the 1988 Seoul Games, announced his retirement after

Fu takes diving to newer heights

BARCELONA, July 28: Fu Mingxia the little princess of the high board, took women's diving to a higher plane on Monday when she won China's third successive platform Olympic gold medal, reports Reuters.

The teenage world champion, slim as reed and graceful as a swallow, scored 461.43 points, a Games record in this event.

She finished exactly 50 points ahead of silver medalist Elena Mirochin of the CIS.

Fu piled up so many points that she would still have won if she had missed out one of her less difficult efforts in the eight-dive final.

Ron O'Brien, coach of American bronze medalist Mary Ellen Clark, was captivated by Fu's artistry and precision.

Fu's performance today set new standards for women's diving from the 10-metre platform," he said.

"Like Louganis in 1983 and 1984 she has taken it to a whole new level of dives," Greg Louganis of the US won double gold medals at the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games.

Since the 1991 World Championships the girl from Hubei has grown — and so has the gap between her and the rest of the world's divers.

In the final, none of her last four optional dives had a degree of difficulty less than 3.0. Only she and Chinese compatriot Zhu Jinhong attempted dives of 3.3 degree of difficulty.

Individual judges scores are multiplied by the degree of difficulty to give a total score for a dive. Clark had only one dive over 2.8.

"She's shown that you're going to have to be able to do a backward 3-1/2 somersault or inward 3-1/2 to stay with her," said O'Brien.

Morochina was resigned to another defeat by Fu. "It's quite logical she won here, she's always first. The younger you are, the easier it is to dive."

Clark believes Fu will stay at the top unlike other young Chinese divers who have won big competitions and then faded.

"It's her precision — if you watch her she practises again and again. She doesn't miss, consistency means a lot in this Game."

Fu, listed by Olympic officials and swimming authorities 14 next month, may be the second youngest diving a champion after American Marjorie Geestrung who won the springboard title aged 13 years and 267 days in 1936.

But at her victory press conference a smiling Fu said she was actually 14, nearly 15.

She is credited with being the youngest world champion, winning the title aged 12 in January 1991.

"I am absolutely delighted of course. It always makes one happy to receive a gold medal," she said.

Petite and shy, Fu looks very young. She gave short answers to most questions, expressed taste for Madonna and ice cream and said she was working on some new dives.

"I do have some work to do. I must make some effort to increase my degree of difficulty," she said. "I must work to overcome some psychological problems and train myself to relax better."

Iwasaki, Japan's surprise



China's gymnastic legend Li Ning came to Barcelona for his third Olympics. But he is not active on the Court any more, reports Xinhua.

The Chinese, who won six golds at the 1983 World Cup and took three golds, two silvers and one bronze at the Los Angeles Games in 1984, is sitting on the court side as a judge. Li has worked as an international judge for the past two years.

Zenovka leads in pentathlon

BARCELONA, July 28: Eduard Zenovka of the Unified Team moved into first place in the modern pentathlon Tuesday after the cross-country running event, the fourth of five disciplines, reports AP.

Zenovka came in third in the 4,000-metre run in sweltering heat. Manuel Barroso of Portugal won the event in 12 minutes, 26.07 seconds.

Zenovka's time was 12:50.02.

Zenovka's overall performance, including earlier fencing, swimming and shooting competition gave him 4,625 points.

Akadiusz Skrzypaszek of Poland, who led after Monday, was second with 4,519 points.

The Unified Team led the team competition with 13,168 points. Poland was second with 12,996, Hungary third with 12,981 and France fourth with 12,758.

The United States, third heading into Tuesday's competition, fell to fifth with 12,754.

Hotel owners make a kill

BARCELONA, July 28: Barcelona hotel owners have made a killing on the Olympics with a near sell out of their 33,000 beds, city officials said today, reports Reuters.

Eighty per cent of rooms are occupied by officials, athletes, journalists and staff working on the Olympics.

City officials said that other visitors boosted the occupancy rate at hotels of all classes to 95.97 per cent compared with normal levels of less than 70 per cent.

Hotels on the Catalan coast are at the same time suffering a sharp slump of bookings because of the international recession, with levels down to about 40 per cent.

Thousands of journalists and athletes are also living in apartments in the Olympic media villages while a total of around 50,000 VIPs and guests of Games sponsors will stay on luxury liners and yachts moored in the harbour.

Khoka off to Barcelona

Sports Reporter State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain Khoka, who is also the chef de mission of the Bangladesh Olympic squad, left Dhaka for London en route to Barcelona last evening to join the team already there.

The minister could not lead the Bangladesh team which departed on July 21 due to the budget session of the parliament.

Sadek Hossain is expected to meet the sports leaders of different countries during his stay at the Spanish city.

Tan takes Fu's cue

BARCELONA, July 28: Tan Liangle put himself in position to win China's second gold medal in diving by easily winning the preliminary round in the men's 3-metre springboard event Tuesday, reports AP.

Tan, who won silver medals in the event at the 1984 and 1988 Olympics, accumulated 426,390 points to top American Mark Lenzi, who had 409,110.

Lenzi was elated by his finish, but he is conceding nothing to Tan in Wednesday's championship.

"I love this," Lenzi said. "I made the Olympic final. This is awesome. Tomorrow, I'll just do the best I can, if I don't win, there's always Atlanta."

Tan will be trying to match the accomplishment of Fu Mingxia, the 13-year-old Chinese girl who won the women's 10 meter platform event Monday.

Germany's Albin Killat was third with 374,220 in the men's competition, and nine others made Wednesday's 12-man final.

The 27-year-old Chinese took the lead in the third round, on the last of his required dives. He widened his advantage throughout the optional, or more difficult portion of the competition. Tan and Lenzi tied for the highest score in the fourth round with a score of 72,900, and that performance lifted Lenzi from fourth to second.

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Legend turns judge

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Some 400,000 people are expected to visit the city for the 16-day Games which opened on Saturday.