

Jackpot for Spanish medalists

BARCELONA, July 30: Spanish gold medalists at the Olympic Games are to receive 1 million dollar pensions from the Barcelona bank headed by International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch, reports Reuter.

Team officials on Wednesday said the incentive scheme offered by La Caixa, whose chairman is Samaranch, ranged from 100 million pesetas (1 million) for an individual gold to 20 million pesetas (200,000) dollar for fifth place.

Champion with a difference

BARCELONA, July 30: Lee Eun-Chul won South Korea's second shooting gold medal on Wednesday and then set his sights on the title of the most modest champion of the Olympics, reports Reuter.

Lee, who started eighth and last going into the final of the free rifle prone event, attributed his success to luck rather than his own talent.

"You have to have some luck to win," he said. "I thought I would be able to get into the final but I never expected to win it. It's the first time I've ever won an English match (prone competition)."

Then turning to Norwegian silver medalist Harald Stenvaag, the affable Lee added: "He's the best. He's won many medals."

Lee, world champion in the free rifle three positions, said he had pinned more hopes of a medal in that event.

Lee, who recorded a brilliant series of high scores in his 10 shots in the final, finished with 702.5 points to 701.4 for Stenvaag and 701.1 for Yugoslav Stevan Pletikosic, who appeared as an independent.

Pletikosic refused to answer questions about whether his preparations had been hampered by the turmoil in his home country.

"That is politics and this is sport. I will only talk about sport," he said.

Schumann wins shooting gold

MOLLET DEL VALLES, Spain, July 30: Ralf Schumann of Germany won the men's rapid fire pistol gold medal Thursday, reports AP.

The silver went to Afanasij Kuzmins of Latvia and Vladimir Vokhmianine of the Unified Team won the bronze.

Italian spikers post 2nd win

BARCELONA, July 30: World champions Italy swept off a late charge from a spirited Japan to chalk up their second straight win in the men's Olympic volleyball preliminary round here Thursday, reports AP.

They won 15-13, 15-7, 17-15 in nearly two hours.

Japan's only win in three games was when the federation returned the result of their match against the United States on a technicality.



Poland's Arkadiusz Skrzypaszek guides his mount Cornes over a jump in the final event of the Modern Pentathlon in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP photo



OLYMPIC SPECIAL



BARCELONA BRIGGS

Track & field trigger off today

BARCELONA, July 30: The world's fastest runners take to the track on Friday in the preliminary sprints of an Olympic 100 metres competition which features Ben Johnson but not Carl Lewis in the men's opening rounds, reports Reuter.

Two finals the men's shot put and the 20 km walk — are decided on the opening day of the athletics competition.

But with due deference to Swiss Werner Guenther, the shot put favourite, and the road walkers it will be the first two rounds of the men's and women's 100 metres which command centre stage.

Johnson, who created the greatest scandal in Olympic history when he tested positive for drugs following the 1988 Olympic final, is back after a two-year suspension.

Lewis, who inherited the 1988 gold after Johnson's disqualification is absent after failing to qualify in the US trials.

The six times Olympic champion won the greatest 100 metres race in history at the Tokyo World Championships last year, clocking a world record 9.86 in the final ahead of the then world record holder Leroy Burrell.

Burrell believes he is favourite for Saturday's final, provided he gets past the first three rounds. Lewis also thinks his Santa Monica Track Club teammate should win.

"Leroy is the champion," Lewis said. "Leroy has to be the favourite just because of his past record."

Burrell certainly sounds confident and believes he has learned from his mistakes at the Tokyo World Championships final.

"I accelerated a little too fast and that was the result of worrying about people who had got out faster than I had," Burrell said. "I lost energy too soon."

Lewis and Burrell both paid tribute to 32-year-old Briton Linford Christie, the European champion and Olympic silver medalist who looks in the best shape of his life.

"Linford has been the most consistent," Lewis said. Burrell agreed. "Linford is going to come here and do very well," he said. "I think he's one of the key guys because of his history."

In the women's 100 American Gwen Torrence, the world silver medalist, is likely to race in Saturday's final against a woman who has been the best sprinter in the world since the 1988 Seoul Games

but who has yet to win a major title.

Jamaican Merlene Ottey won 57 straight 100 metres races after Seoul before losing to Katrin Krabbe and Torrence in the World Championships 100 metres final.

At the age of 32, Ottey must be taking part in her last Olympics and this year she has clearly been concentrating on the Olympics rather than worrying about the Grand Prix circuit.

Her chances are inevitably boosted by Krabbe's absence after the German decided not to take part here despite being cleared of a doping charge by the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

The first day of the nine-day programme kicks off with the women's 100 metres heats and finishes late in the evening with the men's 10,000 metres first round.

Canadian team the same day Lewis failed to make the US team.

"I don't think he'll be a factor in the Olympic Games. I hope not, so it will be a pretty boring Olympic Games, I guess," Burrell quipped.

Burrell's uncertainty about his physical status stems from an injured back muscle that caused him to double over in pain after finishing second to Lewis on July 21 in Sestriere, Italy.

"The injury started by being the muscle being tight, then it started cramping, then it started hurting," he said. "At Sestriere, it reached a plateau. ... I need a new back."

Burrell has not competed since. He thinks the rest has been very beneficial.

"I feel rejuvenated," he said. "I haven't felt this good for a couple of years. The others know that I've run faster than any of them."

It's the kind of psychological edge Burrell is counting on to win the gold.

Lewis set the world record of 9.86 seconds at last year's world championships, breaking Burrell's previous mark of 9.90 and beating him by .02 seconds. His missing the 100 gives the race a whole new look.

The most intriguing entry is Johnson, the first-place finisher at the 1988 Games who later was banned for two years for using drugs and stripped of his gold medal. Oddly enough, Johnson qualified for the

Burrell believes the gold is his

BARCELONA, July 30: If confidence means anything, then Leroy Burrell, an American former world record holder, is a cinch to win the Olympic gold medal at 100 metres, reports AP.

Some of the other contenders for perhaps the most coveted gold medal in track and field include Burrell's teammates Dennis Mitchell and Mark Witherspoon, Nigerians Olapade Adeniken and Davidson Ezinwa, and Britain's Linford Christie and Jason Livingston.

There are also Namibia's Frankie Fredericks, Jamaica's Raymond Stewart and Canadians Bruny Surin, Ateeq Mahorn and Ben Johnson.

"I'm a bit more talented and a little more experienced than most of the other athletes," Burrell said. "I've beaten everybody. ... Why shouldn't I be able to do it again?"

The 1991 world champion silver medalist is not the boastful. He is just confident of

his ability in a race considered wide open because of the absence of two-time Olympic champion Carl Lewis.

The 25-year-old Burrell is not worried that the shadow of Lewis will hover over the 100.

"People are going to say that just because Carl is the world record-holder," Burrell said. "But if people run fast, they'll forget that. If somebody runs 9.98 or in the low 9.90s, that will be good."

"You can't say that if Carl was here that this would have happened or that would have happened. It's a moot point. He's not here."

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At the 1988 Games in Seoul, 10 athletes tested positive for drugs, including Ben Johnson, the Canadian sprinter who set a world record of 9.79 seconds in the 100 metres. Five of those athletes were weightlifters, including two gold medalists from Bulgaria.

Johnson tested positive for Stanazolol, an anabolic steroid used to help athletes recover from training injuries and promote muscle growth.

Johnson was stripped of the gold medal and world record, and banned from track for two years. He served that suspension, passed repeated drug tests since his reinstatement and is in Barcelona as a member of the Canadian team. He opens competition in the 100-meter heats Friday.

Drug testing at the Olympics, and most other major sports events, is a two-stage process, starting with chemical analysis of an athlete's post competition urine sample.

Tests usually involve medal winners, the fourth place finisher and another athlete selected at random, although some sports follow slightly different routines. Swimming, for instance, does not automatically test all medal winners.

The urine sample is split into two parts. If the first portion shows signs of drugs, the second is unsealed and tested. Only if both portions are found to contain drugs and officials find no mitigating circumstances is an athlete declared positive for drug use.

In 1988, Linford Christie, a British sprinter, was found to have traces of steroids in his urine but was not suspended. The BOA and the international Olympic Committee announced at that time that Christie apparently had ingested the steroids unknowingly from herbal tea he drank during pre-Olympic training camps in Japan.

Croats edge past the hosts

BARCELONA, July 30: Drazen Petrovic scored 28 points and Dino Radja added 25 as Croatia closed the game with a 20-6 run for an 88-79 victory over Spain on Wednesday in men's Olympic basketball, reports AP.

Croatia (2-1) trailed 73-68 with 5:32 to play on a 3-point play by Juan Antonio San Epifanio, the last runner to carry the torch in last Saturday's opening ceremonies.

Those were Spain's final points until there were 40 seconds to play as Croatia scored 16 straight points, eight by Radja on four baskets each assisted by Toni Kukoc. Spain (1-2) missed six shots and committed four turnovers in the run.

Petrovic, who plays for the New Jersey Nets, scored Croatia's first 13 points of the game and connected on his first seven shots from the field. He finished 11 for 21 from the field. Kukoc, who struggled in Croatia's loss to the United States on Monday as the focus of some intense defense, finished with eight points.

They won 15-13, 15-7, 17-15 in nearly two hours.

Japan's only win in three games was when the federation returned the result of their match against the United States on a technicality.

Three Britons caught doping

BARCELONA, July 30: European sprint champion Jason Livingston and two weightlifters — all Britons — were sent home from the Olympics in the first drug case of the Barcelona Games, officials disclosed Thursday.

Livingston tested positive for Methandianone. Davies and Saxton tested positive for Clenbuterol, a drug used to treat asthma. It is banned in Britain but available in Germany, Searle said.

The BOA said Livingston can appeal the suspension, but the weightlifters admitted using a banned substance. They, however, are appealing the lifetime ban that goes with the suspension.

The incidents have caused human tragedy, shock and emotional distress for the competitors themselves and officials around them and their fellow competitors," commented Dick Palmer, head of the British delegation.

Livingston is the European indoor 60-meter champion. His best time in the 100 this year is 10.09 seconds, fifth fastest among those at the Games.

Davies competes in the heavyweight (110 kg) class and Sixton, a gold medalist in the 1990 Commonwealth Games, lifts in the 100-kilogram class.

On Saturday, shotputter Kalman Konya was dropped from the German team for failing to show up for a drug test.

Other British weightlifters have been suspended before. Ricky Chaplin and Gareth Hives of Wales were banned from the sport for life for positive drug tests during the 1990 Commonwealth Games.

The suspensions of the three British athletes is the first drug case since the 1992 Games opened and come four years after the broadest — and by far the most notorious — doping scandal in Olympic history.

Livingston, scheduled to run in the 100 metres and 400-meter relay, was suspended by the British Olympic Association (BOA) for testing positive for anabolic steroids on July 15 after a random test in Britain.

The weightlifters, Andrew Davies and Andrew Saxton, were suspended for testing positive for a stimulant and anabolic agents. BOA spokeswoman Caroline Searle said at a news conference.

Davies and Saxton also tested positive in random tests last month in Britain, Searle said. Livingston returned to Britain on Tuesday and the weightlifters left the Games on Wednesday, Searle added.

"They have been suspended from the team and sent home," she told reporters.

International Olympic Committee spokeswoman

Michèle Verdier said, "The BOA have taken the decision they felt had to be taken. They (the British athletes) were not tested during the Games. It's not a matter for the IOC."

She stressed that no athlete has tested positive for drug use so far during the Games.

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Sponsor made Sadoviy's success possible

BARCELONA, July 30: Russian swimmer Evgeny Sadoviy won his third gold medal of the Barcelona Olympics on Wednesday and then thanked his sponsor, reports Reuter.

It could never have happened in the not-too-distant days when the Soviet state controlled sport with an iron grip but things are different now, as 20-year-old Sadoviy is happy to admit.

"Sport was something which belonged to our country, the Soviet Union," he said after winning the 400 metres freestyle. "Everything was subordinated to that."

"Now the state is run by different people and everything has to be done by your own efforts. Now it's sponsors and our families who help us but there's no state patronage anymore."

Sadoviy said a company from his home city of Volgograd had supported him and a group of other swimmers after the collapse of state aid left them without proper swimming facilities.

"We were running from pool to pool for training and it was often hard to get there," he added. "We were having to pay our own way and it was difficult to cope with everything financially."

"Now through the sponsors there are people responsible for all that. They pay for us to swim in the same pool so we are no longer running backwards and forwards."

Sadoviy said the Soviet team had spent almost three weeks before the Olympics training at high altitude in central Asia.

"It's where they set all the records in our country," he said. "It's the best possible preparation."

Sadoviy, who slashed the world record of Australian rival Kieren Perkins in the 400 metres, had earlier taken gold in the 200 metres freestyle and 4x200 metres freestyle relay.

"I thought I could do it at the Olympic Games," he said. "But it's very special and I was getting very nervous."

"I was worried because I was thinking about how you have to train harder and harder for the Olympic Games."

Sadoviy shaved his hair off just before the Games. "I first did that two and a half years ago at the national championships," he said. "It felt as if I was flying through the water."

Edberg, a bronze medalist in both singles and doubles in Seoul, went down 6-0, 6-4, 6-4 to Russian Andrei Chesnokov on another sweltering afternoon.

The defeat followed the pattern of the Swede's three-set drubbing by the same opponent in the third round of the French Open earlier this year.

The second seed barely featured in a contest lasting only 97 minutes.

American Pete Sampras, beaten semifinalist at Wimbledon, had a much happier time, thrashing Australian Wally Masur 6-1, 7-6, 6-4 and compatriot Michael Chang also wore a smile following his 6-1, 6-4, 3-6, 6-0 victory over Argentine Alberto Mancini.

All the leading women's seeds advanced safely to the second round, headed by Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Jennifer Capriati.

Edberg's defeat was tinged with irony as he has been one of the main supporters of tennis's inclusion as a full Olympic sport.

In the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, when it was a demonstration event, an 18-year-old Edberg walked away with a special medal after winning

the tournament. But his fine streak of Olympic form was ruthlessly snuffed out by Chesnokov.

"I played badly, there's no doubt about that. I couldn't keep the ball in court," Edberg admitted. "I was at least aiming for a medal here. It's a long time since I've lost in the first round anywhere."

Chesnokov was understandably delighted, in his normal deadpan way. "I don't know if I won it, maybe he lost it. But if someone had told me before the match I'd win by that score, I wouldn't have believed it."

Jim Courier won 14 consecutive games to cascade past Gilad Bloom of Israel Thursday 6-2, 6-0, 6-0 in the second round.

Seventh-seeded Guy Forget became the third top-10 seed eliminated in men's singles when he lost to Magnus Larsson of Sweden, 6-3, 6-3, 6-1.

Sampras' tennis was quickly relegated to a supporting role behind his decision to sleep in a hotel outside the Games Village.

"I just couldn't sleep in the Village. It's too hot," he said. "When I got there was saw the size of the bed and how hot it was, I knew it would be tough to stay there. My rest is much more important."

His opponent Masur and Frenchman Henri Leconte, both experienced professionals, agreed the heat, measured courtside at 44 degrees Celsius, was a stifling as anywhere they had played.

The British judge was so unimpressed he gave Killat 0.0 points, Killat, first after six of the 11 rounds, slumped to 12th and last of the finalists after his effort.

Not a chance

BARCELONA, July 30 (Reuter): Free tickets will not be handed out to fill empty seats at Olympic venues, even if people who have paid for tickets do not show up, the head of the Olympics Organising Committee (COOB) said on Wednesday.

COOB had been considering distributing free passes to the public if seats were still empty towards the end of the event.

But COOB chief executive Josep Miguel Abad later said that would not happen. "It's something that we looked at but we've totally ruled it out now," he added. People have complained about empty seats at some of the venues.

COOB spokesman Pedro Palacios said the gaps were largely because multinational companies bought blocks of tickets for corporate entertainment but their guests did not always turn up.

Rivas reprimanded

OLYMPICS organisers said on Wednesday they had reprimanded the president of Panama's Olympic Committee for allegedly selling tickets in the street but planned no action against him.

Spanish police said last weekend they had caught Meliton Sanchez Rivas selling tickets outside the main stadium and confiscated 300 from him.

He later denied the report, saying police had assumed that because he had 152 tickets in his bag he wanted to sell them.

Pedro Placios, spokesman for the COOB organising committee, told a news conference: "We don't plan any further action but he's been told it's better to go through established channels than standing out in the street."

"We have informed him that is not viewed very favourably here in Spain," Palacios said.

IOC spokeswoman Michele Verdier said the International Olympic Committee planned no sanctions against Sanchez.

Unauthorised selling of tickets for sports events is not a criminal offence in Spain and earlier in the Games a judge refused to take action against ticket touts arrested by police. Barcelona police said on Tuesday they had seized 3,600 tickets from gangs of touts since the Olympics began.

Hapless Olympian

IRANIAN light heavy weight Ali Kazemi entered the ranks of most hapless Olympics competitors on Wednesday when he missed the bus to the boxing venue and was disqualified for arriving too late to fight.

"I missed the bus is what he said," declared American judge Jerry Dusenberry.

Kazemi rushed into the arena shouting and gesticulating at somebody behind him and clambered into the ring ready to fight Pakistan's Asghar Muhammad.

But he had no gloves or headguard and his hands were not bandaged.

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