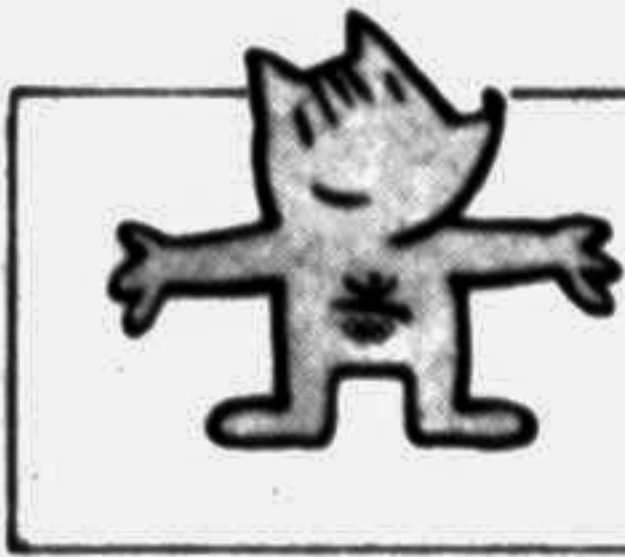


OLYMPIC SPECIAL



Mitchell, Burrell set early pace

BARCELONA, July 31: Americans Dennis Mitchell and Leroy Burrell set the early pace in the men's 100 metres today, opening day of the Olympic athletics competition, reports Reuter.



Leroy Burrell of the US runs to win the first heat of the men's 100m in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP photo

Seoul, was applauded when he was introduced and responded by qualifying in second place with a time of 10.55 seconds.

"I am not making any promises I am going to win," Johnson said. "I am just happy to be back here."

CUTHBERT QUICKEST Juliet Cuthbert, a member of the Jamaican women's 4x100 metres relay team who won the gold medal at last year's Tokyo World Championships, clocked the fastest time in the women's first round.

Cuthbert finished in 11.14, running in to a slight head wind in an opening round which also contained no surprises.

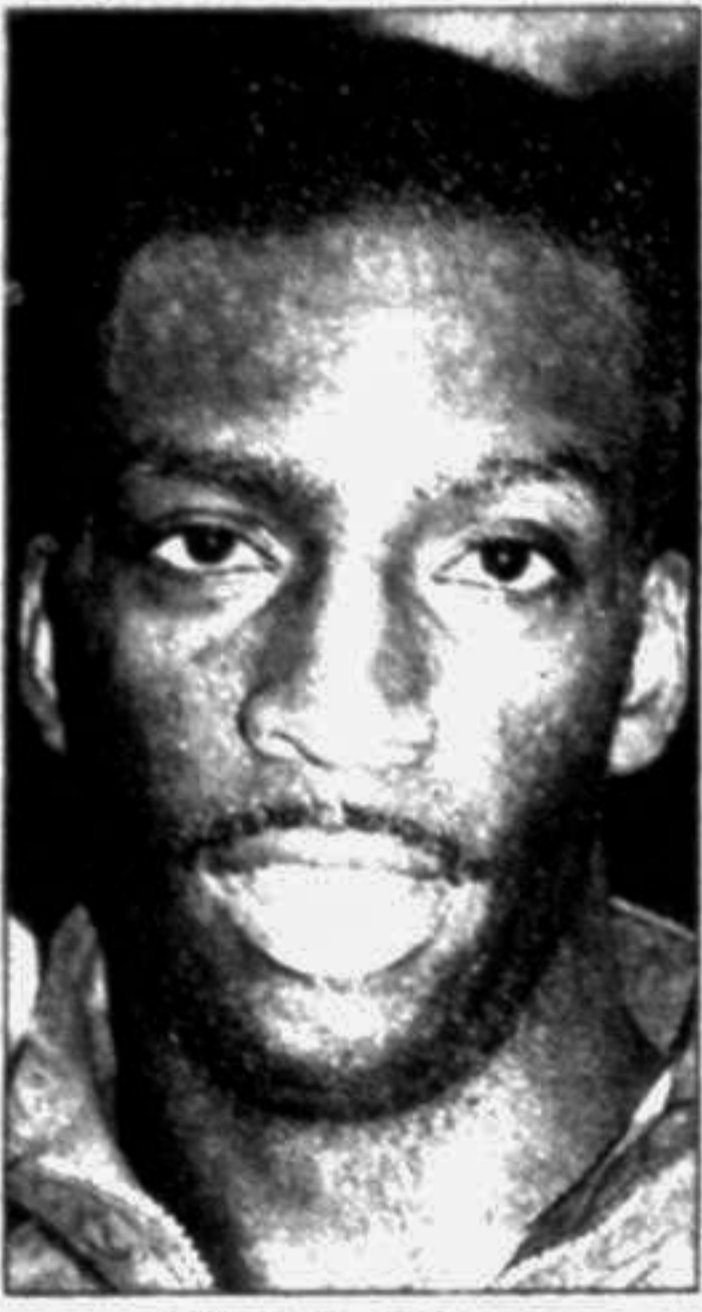
BEYER FAILS Veteran German Udo Beyer, 1976 Olympic men's shot put champion while competing for East Germany, failed to qualify for Friday evening's final.

Switzerland's twice world champion Werner Guenther needed only one put to qualify for the final, recording 20.50 in the first round. American James Doehring headed the qualifiers with 20.53.

Germany's world and Olympic champion Sigrun Grau won her first round heat in the women's 800 metres but her great rival and teammate Christine Wachtel failed to qualify for Saturday's semifinal, struggling home in fourth place in the second heat.

Mike Johnson versus Santa Monica gang

BARCELONA, July 31: Sprinter Mike Johnson says members of the Santa Monica Track Club don't want him on America's 1,600 metre relay team because they are jealous of him and feel



MIKE JOHNSON threatened by his talent, reports AP.

"I think it's an issue of the Santa Monica Track Club versus Michael Johnson, who is a threat to their domination over the 100, the 200 and the 400," Johnson said Friday.

"I think they see me as a threat, and there's only so much glory in track and field, and the more I get, the less they get."

Johnson's remarks are the latest escalation of a battle between Johnson and the club since Johnson said that US track coach Mel Rosen has asked him to run on the relay instead of Andrew Valmon.

Valmon finished fourth in the 400 at the US Olympic trials last June, and a spot on the relay team is usually the consolation prize for missing a spot in the 400. But Johnson, who

ran 19.79 to win the 200 trials, was an obvious choice for the team.

He ran 43.98 for 400 metres earlier this summer, and was ranked No 1 in the world for the 200 and the 400 each of the past two years — no one in history had ever been ranked first in both those events. He declined to run the 400 at the trials because of scheduling conflicts between the 200 and the 400 at the Olympics.

"Maybe it's just a 19.79 thing, a 43.98 thing," Johnson said. "In America, you go by the rules and regulations, and the rule is that the four best people make up the relay. I don't think there's any doubt in anyone's mind that I'm one of the four best 400-metre men in the world."

Two of the three other relay members — Danny Everett and Steve Lewis — run for the club, while the third member, Quincy Watts, ran for Southern Cal this season.

But Johnson insisted he and the other relay runners have avoided turning the sticky situation into a series of ugly personal battles.

"I've seen them since I've been here. I've spoken with them, and I don't have a problem with them," Johnson said. "These are my teammates. We're working for the same goal, and that's winning a gold medal."

The quartet has worked out for two days, going through routine drills on baton passing without incident, he added.

Johnson also said he likes the chances of Watts in the open 400. Watts, running in his first Olympics, won the NCAA 400 and finished third at the trials behind Everett and Lewis.

"Quincy has shown some consistency this year and Quincy has shown some heart," Johnson said. "Danny, you hear maybe he's hurt, it's kind of wishy-washy. I just don't see Steve as a guy who's going to win."

100 metres today, opening day of the Olympic athletics competition, reports Reuter.

Both men clocked 10.21 seconds on a clear, hot morning in which all the favourites qualified comfortably for Friday evening's second round.

The gears are rolling, the gasoline's firing, American champion Mitchell said. "I want this more than anything in life."

Burrell, world silver medalist and former world record holder, looked controlled and powerful in his heat.

He said he had not suffered from the back problem which has affected his training.

"I was cruising here," Burrell said. "I will run faster this afternoon and tomorrow."

European champion and world silver medalist Linford Christie of Britain won his heat in 10.48 while Namibia's Frankie Fredericks looked a distinct medal possibility as he cruised to victory in 10.29.

The Namibian world 200 metres silver medalist shot out of the blocks and won by five metres from Britain's Marcus Adams despite slowing noticeably over the final metres.

Ben Johnson, the Canadian sprinter who has served a two-year suspension after testing positive for drugs following the

Top ladies in fastlane qualify easily

BARCELONA, July 31: Most of the favourites, including Merlene Ottey of Jamaica and Irina Privalova of the Unified Team, easily qualified Friday for the second round of competition in the women's 100 metres, reports AP.

Americans Evelyn Ashford, Gwen Torrence and Gail Devers were among the favourites who breezed through their opening test at 100 metres as Olympic track and field opened on a sultry morning.

Ashford, 35, is on her fifth US Olympic team. She also competed in 1976, 1984 and 1988, and was knocked out of the 1980 Moscow Games by the US boycott. She has won three gold and one silver medal in previous Games.

In the men's shot put, gold medal favourite Werner Guenther of Switzerland and Michael Stulze of the United States were among the early qualifiers for Friday night's final.

Olympic track and field, tarnished by Big Ben's drug use in 1988, is tarnished by Baby Ben even as it begins this time.

The sport that has spent four years trying to recover from the Ben Johnson scandal at the Seoul Games is troubled again. The problem now is a runner who once idolised Johnson.

On the eve of Friday's start of competition, British sprinter Jason Livingston — "Baby Ben" because of his resemblance to Johnson — was sent home by team officials after testing positive for steroid use in a random test two weeks ago.

It was an inauspicious start for the competition, which already was suffering from the absence of some of its biggest names — including women's sprint champion Katrin Krabbe

and Olympic heroes such as Roger Kingdom and Edwin Moses.

Carl Lewis will not be defending his 100-metre title, and world champion Dan O'Brien won't be seeking a record in the decathlon. Florence Griffith Joyner is bidding her throne as the queen of speed.

ready to run in the Olympics.

Moses, who won 400-metre hurdles medals in 1976, 1984 and 1988, was unable to compete in the US trial and Lewis — slowed by a sinus infection — failed to qualify for the 100 or 200.

Lewis did qualify for the long jump, however, setting up a possible replay of his dramatic battle with Mike Powell at the World Championships last summer. That battle produced a world record, and another record may be needed to win the long jump in Barcelona.

Johnson is back from his drug exile, though he is much slower than in 1988 and was expected to have difficulty surviving preliminary rounds of the 100.

Also back is Zola Pieters, who as Zola Budd ran for Britain in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and was involved in a controversial collision with American Mary Decker in the 3,000 metres.

This time Pieters is running for her native South Africa, one of several nations whose return to the Olympics will have a major impact on the track and field competition. Also back is Cuban strong

man Michael Stich became the fifth men's seed eliminated from the Olympics when he lost Friday to countryman Carl-Uwe Steeb, 6-4, 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, reports AP.

Stich was seeded eighth in the 64-player tournament. In another second-round match, No 5 seed Conchita Martinez helped Spain remain unbeaten by sweeping Sandra Cecchini of Italy, 6-4, 6-3.

On Thursday, Jim Courier and Pete Sampras edged Sweden's Stefan Edberg and Anders Jarryd in a star-studded first-round doubles match 1-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (8-6), 6-4.

A peculiarity in the seeding system brought together the world's three top-ranked singles players in the opening round.

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Duels at the net repeatedly sent the ball on an improbable geometric course. The near-capacity crowd on Court 1 loved it, and Sampras said the players did, too.

"It was fun to play. Win or lose, we all had a pretty good time." The result meant a hasty departure from Barcelona for Edberg, a first-round upset victim in singles Wednesday.

It also capped a good day for Courier, an earlier winner in singles. With his help, the US men improved their record to 5-0.

"We don't have any nicknames; we're just here to play tennis," Courier said. "We're not quite the clear-cut favourites the basketball team is, so it's a different situation."

The top-seeded Courier won the final 14 games in a 6-2, 6-0, 6-0 trouncing of Israel's Gilad Bloom. No 1 women's seed Steffi Graf eliminated Brenda Schultz of Holland with similar ease, 6-1, 6-0.

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Third-seeded Jennifer Capriati of the United States beat Patricia Tarabini of Argentina on Friday to advance to the third round.

Capriati won 6-4, 6-1. Clay specialist Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, the Barcelona native and No 2 seed, eliminated Mana Endo of Japan, 6-0, 6-1.

Ben returns to warm applause

BARCELONA, July 31: Welcomed back to the Olympics by warm applause, Ben Johnson eased through his first-round heat in the 100-metre dash and said, "I'm not feeling any pressure right now," reports AP.

Johnson, the disgraced first-place finisher in 1988 who later was disqualified for testing positive for steroids and being stripped of his gold medal, finished second in his heat in 10.55 seconds.

Wearing No 226 on his red and white Canadian uniform and the usual gold chain around his neck, Johnson, running in lane three, burst out of the blocks first. After establishing an early lead, he was overtaken by Davidson Eatinwa of Nigeria about halfway through the race and held on for second.

"I'm not promising I'm going to win. I'm just happy to be here," he said.

The start of the race was marred by one false start and one break in which no one was charged with a false start, although Johnson appeared to flinch in the blocks.

"There were a lot of false starts in the first round, but when we get in the second round, the body will adjust itself," Johnson said.

Johnson was pleased with the crowd support. When asked about it, he shook his head positively.

Unpardonable oversight

PARIS, July 31: French sprinter Bruno Marie-Rose, excluded from the 100-metre race at the Olympics because French organisers forgot to register him, says "someone's going to have to pay," reports AP.

Marie-Rose, a member of the French team that set the world record in the 4x100 relay in 1990, was told Thursday he could not take part in the event in Barcelona.

Why? Because the French Olympic Committee neglected to inform Olympic organisers in Barcelona that he would compete.

"Who am I mad at? Pfooh," Marie-Rose was quoted as saying Friday in the newspaper Le Parisien.

"Serge Bord said he would assume responsibility. That's normal, since he's sports director for the team," Marie-Rose said. "But if he's not responsible, someone's going to have to pay."

Serge Bord informed the sprinter that he could not compete in what is arguably the Games' most prestigious event because someone had forgotten to fax Marie-Rose's name to organisers in Barcelona.

Serge said he would resign after the Games end Aug 9 because of the oversight.

The Marseille newspaper Le Provençal summed up the national mood in an editorial Friday.

"The gold medal for stupidity doesn't exist yet, but it should be invented. When it is, there will be a crowd on the winner's podium."

France-Soir, a Paris newspaper, was equally stern.

"We are the laughingstock of Barcelona," France-Soir said. "Now we have confirmation that the French National Olympic Committee is just a bunch of clowns."

The record-setting relay team that included Marie-Rose broke a long-standing US hold on the mark by running 37.79 seconds at the World Championships in Split in the former Yugoslavia in 1990.

The US track team snatched back the record at the following year's World Championships in Tokyo, running 37.50.

Marie-Rose was not expected to win a medal in Barcelona, having just made the qualifying time of 10.30 seconds in the event.

"It's like I'm sleepwalking, that this is a nightmare that will go away," Marie-Rose told the sports daily L'Equipe. "It's so stupid, so idiotic."

IOC again warns USOC about Lewis, Barkley columns

BARCELONA, July 31: The IOC said on Thursday it had told the US team for the second time that Carl Lewis must not work as a journalist at the Olympics and issued a separate warning about basketball "Bad Boy" Charles Barkley, reports Reuter.

IOC spokeswoman Michele Verdier said the committee's legal affairs department had sent letters to the US Olympic Committee (USOC) about Lewis and Barkley.

Unfamiliar pressure for La Familia Sanchez

BARCELONA, July 31: She's the queen mother of tennis in Spain, clutching her daughter's rackets, rumping around town in shorts and a straw hat crowned with Olympic pins.

He's the patriarch of La Familia Sanchez, a gray-haired man with a sly smile, wise eyes and a pleasantly rumped look.

Marisa and Emilio Sanchez Sr, and two of their children in the Summer Games, Arantxa and Emilio Jr, are under perhaps more pressure at the Olympics than anyone else, yet you'd never know it to see them, writes AP.

It's not as if they need more medals to add to the family's 2,000 trophies, a mere 200 of which glitter on the walls of their stately apartment in the heart of the city.

It's not that their lives or fortunes would suffer if they didn't win any of the four Olympic golds they have a chance at on the red clay courts set up here specifically to suit their games.

Arantxa, 20, could still go back and live quite comfortably with her parents. Emilio, 27, could go back to his apartment without shame and continue a career that has already earned him \$3.8 million in prize money.

It's just "The Obligation," as the family calls it, that weighs

on them. The obligation is not to win only a medal but a gold. Not only a gold in singles, but a gold in doubles, too. And not by only one of the Sanchez's but by both of them.

"It is great to have the Olympics here, but it's difficult because we are very focused upon," Marisa Sanchez said. "Everyone always says, 'Arantxa will win.' She has the obligation to win, and that's not easy. There is pressure because all the world is watching her, saying she needs to win."

"Ever since we won the Olympics, the Spanish press has been pressuring Arantxa. If she doesn't win, they'll say, 'What a failure!'"

Emilio, ranked 25th in the world in singles, has only slightly less pressure than his fifth-ranked sister. Any medal in singles for him would probably satisfy his compatriots, but they expect nothing less than gold in the doubles.

"They both have to win in doubles, but it is difficult because they drew poorly and have tough competitors," Emilio Sr said.

But if they should win? "For us, it would be the greatest triumph, and for Spain as well," his wife said. "My children really want to win for their country, in their country. For their parents and for themselves, it is the maximum they could obtain."

Karelin—the aesthetic grappler

BARCELONA, July 31: Alexander Karelin lists his hobbies as reading, classical music and poetry.

Nothing strange about that, except that the giant Siberian looks like he could play a movie serial killer and flips huge opponents over on the Olympic wrestling mat, reports Reuter.

His 1.98 metre body bulges with muscles and is topped by a close-cropped head with deep-set eyes protected by high cheekbones and a heavy brow.

His fixed stare will send shudders down your spine and in Greco-Roman wrestling, a sport that depends primarily on sheer strength, his supremacy is unchallenged.

This week, Karelin won a second super-heavyweight (130 kg) Olympic gold medal to add to three world and five European titles.

Greco-Roman wrestling is a sports whose attractions are not easily appreciated by the untutored eye.

frantic grappling in the upright position and apparently suicidal attempts to roll your opponent over by falling backwards.

Alternatively, one hugely muscled man crawls around on his stomach with the other riding his back, trying to flip him over.

This kind of activity causes enormous enthusiasm among Greco-Roman fans, several of whom sat watching the action bare-chested to show off their own formidable muscles.

Normal weaklings felt it best to keep a low profile but even to them it was obvious that among the musclemen, Karelin is a king.

Many believe he is the greatest Greco-Roman grappler of all time and his supremacy in the top weight class is embarrassing.

A wrestler since he was 13, he has not been beaten for five years.

Karelin is gentle and courteous and becomes more animated talking about his love of music than his wrestling style.

His favourite author is said to be satirical novelist Mikhail Bulgakov — hardly soft pulp. He



ALEXANDER KARELIN

likes walking in the Siberian forests and even admits to penning the occasional poem, although about this he is charmingly modest.

"Poems — that's a great name for the little works that I

For Graf, it's a grind

BARCELONA, July 31: A tired and unhappy Steffi Graf said Thursday she would be glad when the Olympics finished and she could get some rest, reports AFP.

The 23-year-old German's outburst came minutes after she rushed into the third round following a simple 6-1, 6-0 win over Brenda Schultz of the Netherlands in only 47 minutes.

Graf complained she was not enjoying herself at the Games, saying she had not had a break since the end of January.

"I'd love to have some time off," stated the four-times Wimbledon champion. "It's tough to keep going. I'm surprised that I won so easily."

She revealed that she had stopped sleeping in the Olympic Village on the nights



STEFFI GRAF conditioning and the cramped room in the Village made it impossible for her to prepare properly for her matches.

"I need to get some good rest before playing," said the German who is defending her Olympic title.

Livingston says he's innocent

LONDON, July 31: British sprinter Jason Livingston, sent home from the Olympics after failing a dope test, has denied using steroids, reports AP.

"I have never, never used steroids," Livingston said. "I abhor the use of drugs in sport. I pleaded with the officials until I was blue in the face."

"The test result must have been a mistake and even the British manager backed me," Livingston, 21, said in an interview published in the South London Press newspaper Friday. He said he would appeal the suspension.

Livingston said the only medications he took before his positive dope test were vitamins, paracetamol and a protein replacer to help recover after a cold.

Livingston was scheduled to run in the 100 metres and 400-metre relay. But he was suspended by the British Olympic Association and sent home Tuesday after he tested positive for the anabolic steroid Methandolone in a July 15 random test conducted in Britain.

Stich exits Stich exits

BARCELONA, July 31: German Michael Stich became the fifth men's seed eliminated from the Olympics when he lost Friday to countryman Carl-Uwe Steeb, 6-4, 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, reports AP.

Stich was seeded eighth in the 64-player tournament. In another second-round match, No 5 seed Conchita Martinez helped Spain remain unbeaten by sweeping Sandra Cecchini of Italy, 6-4, 6-3.

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But the Spanish team suffered its first loss when No 11 seed Sergi Brugueru fell to Mark Kocvrancs of Holland, 1-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-2.

Indonesia's Yayuk Basuki eliminated 13th-seeded Mary Pierce of France 0-6, 6-3, 10-8.

Boris Becker, who needed nearly five hours to beat the world's 312th-ranked player in the opening round, struggled Thursday against No 310, Younes El Aynaoui of Morocco, before winning 6-4, 5-7, 6-4, 6-0.

An angry outburst underscored Becker's frustration. Trailing 2-0 in the second set, he broke his racket over his knee.

"I never did that before in my life," the fifth-seeded German said. "I've tried, and it didn't work. It must have been a special kind of strings."

No 4 seed Goran Ivanisevic had to pull out a five-set match for the second time as many rounds, edging Paul Haarhuis of Holland, 6-7 (4-7), 6-2, 1-6, 6-3, 6-2, in six previous five-setters. Haarhuis had never been beaten.

"Now he has," Ivanisevic said.

A 20-year-old Croatian, Ivanisevic said the Olympic environment has distracted him from tennis.