

No reprieve for Samadov

BARCELONA, Aug 4: The expulsion of Russian weightlifter Ibrahim Samadov from the Olympics and the withdrawal of his bronze medal are final.

Denying press reports that Samadov was to be pardoned for putting down his bronze medal and marching out of the medals ceremony, Verder said: "He had until 5 pm Sunday to submit an appeal and we received nothing. The decisions are final."

However, the International Weightlifting Federation said Tuesday that president Gottfried School's proposal to ban Samadov from lifting for life will not be formally considered until the IWF's next congress in November.

El Pais newspaper quoted Samadov on Tuesday as saying his trainer Atlan Magomadov told him the IOC was to return the medal.

"I won't feel comfortable until I have the medal round my neck," Samadov reportedly said.

At Friday's medals ceremony, in the light heavyweight (82.5 kg) event, Samadov took the medal with his left hand instead of allowing Greek IOC member Nikos Filaretos to put the medal round his neck, as Filaretos had already done for gold medalist Dimas Pyrrros, also of Greece, and Poland's Krzysztof Stiemion, the silver medalist.

Samadov then put down his medal on the podium, stepped off and left the stage.

The Russian said afterwards that he blacked out but School said he didn't believe it.

All three medalists lifted the same total but Samadov lost out on greater body weight.

Pak morale gets a boost

CHILMSFORD, England, Aug 4: Pakistan hammered English county champions Essex by seven wickets on Monday and clinched a 50,000 pound sterling (96,000 US dollars) jackpot to boost their morale ahead of Thursday's final Test, reports Reuter.

Salim Malik and Wasim Akram played vital roles as Pakistan registered their eighth win over a county side to qualify for the prize awarded by a sponsor.

Victory was even sweeter in that Essex are the team of England captain Graham Gooch.

Malik, leading Pakistan in the absence of Javed Miandad who was feeling unwell with stomach trouble, contributed to Pakistan's win with both the bat and the ball and was named man-of-the-match.

He brought himself on to bowl both before and after lunch to take two important wickets with his occasional leg-breaks and then scored exactly half a century as Pakistan sped past the victory target of 193 with seven wickets in hand.

After Essex had resumed at 58 for two, wrist-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed and Malik broke through their resistance with two wickets apiece before Akram blew away the tail to finish with four for 48.

FIFA's new rule

LONDON, Aug 4: Soccer's governing body FIFA has issued a ruling to prevent players trying to get round the new law on back passes, the English Football Association (FA) said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The new regulation, making it an offence for a goalkeeper to touch with his hands a ball that has been kicked back to him by one of his own team, came into force only 10 days ago but has already attracted widespread criticism.

Players in some countries have been getting down on their knees to push the ball back to their goalkeepers in cheeky attempts to bend the rules.

A spokesman said the FA had received a new ruling from FIFA outlawing the practice. And if a player flicks the ball up with his foot onto his head to nod it back to his goalkeeper, that too will result in a booking for ungentlemanly conduct and an indirect free kick, the spokesman said.

"It is irrelevant whether the goalkeeper subsequently touches the ball with his hands or not. The offence is committed by the player in attempting to circumvent both the text and the spirit of the law," FIFA said in a letter to the FA.

Other plays will also land players in trouble, if "in the opinion of the referee a player uses a deliberate trick in order to circumvent the (backpass) amendment," FIFA said.

"This applies to every country, not just England," the FA spokesman said. "Obviously it would have been easier had it been decided earlier. But at least it has happened before the start of the season."

The English soccer season opens on August 15.



OLYMPIC SPECIAL



'Diver Supreme' seeks time for herself

BARCELONA, Aug 4: China's Gao Min retired on Monday with her second Olympic medal as springboard diver supreme, but once it seemed she would not make the grade, reports Reuter.

Gao, burdened by the demands of staying top since 1986, had to be persuaded against quitting last year and encouraged to make this last Olympic challenge.

She was beset by injuries but rose to the occasion and retained her title by a phenomenal margin of nearly 60 points.

"Last year was very difficult year for me," the 21-year-old student from Sichuan said. "For the Olympic Games I have sacrificed a lot, especially physically."

Gao burst on to the international scene as an unknown in

Madrid in 1986 and won the World Championship title.

She collected her first Olympic crown two years later and added two more golds on the one metre and three metre boards at the Perth World Championships in January 1991.

Yet China's chief national coach Xu Yiming said he had to be persuaded to give Gao a chance to train with him.

"In 1982 she had good prospects but I didn't select her. In 1983 when she was going downhill and going back to classes, her parents and superiors asked me to keep her for diving training and come to my training camp," Xu said.

"I said 'okay'. When she came she didn't come with any training equipment, but I discovered her tremendous potential."

"She has very strong will-power. Once she has made up

her mind she will strive to reach her goal. She made tremendous progress. She was first in Madrid, a result her countrymen had not expected. She is a star in China."

Xu said divers began their careers in China at seven or eight, though Gao had been a gymnast and a swimmer before switching to diving.

Gao has not been beaten since a 1988 pre-Olympic competition but the years at the top have taken their toll.

In Perth, she needed injections to ease shoulder pains from over training. In Barcelona, she was troubled by a two-years-old injury to her right shoulder and a later injury in the left shoulder.

She needed further treatment for a waist and back problem which arose during competition.

"I told her she would have two difficult days, with the in-

jury in her shoulders and the psychological pressure. The psychological pressure is more important, the physical injury is secondary," Xu said.

Gao was only third in Saturday's preliminary round but Xu told her to rest, eat well and take care of her shoulder and she could give her best performance.

Xu felt Gao was paying too much heed to the points situation during the final. "I told her to ignore all of that and said you should pay attention to each of your movements and success will come from that."

"But why was she always so much better than her rivals? I believe one thing," Gao said. "You work for what you get. I exerted a lot of effort and I think it was justified."

Now, exhausted by those monumental efforts of training up to eight hours a day, she wants time for herself at last.



China's Gao Min dives for gold in the women's 3m springboard final in Barcelona Monday. — AFP photo

No one likes the 'favourites' tag

BARCELONA, Aug 4: For Pakistan manager Islahuddin and skipper Shahbaz Ahmed there is a lot more than national pride and Asian prestige riding on Wednesday's Olympic hockey semifinal against favourites Germany, reports AFP.

For former Olympian Islahuddin, Pakistan's longest-serving manager, and Shahbaz both have burning personal ambition at stake.

And neither will be content with anything less than the Olympic title to show near the end of their tenures after years of chasing elusive honours.

Three times the Olympic champions in 1960, 1968 and 1984, the closest Pakistan have come to winning a major title in recent years was when they finished as World Cup runners-up in 1990.

Their countrymen think a gold medal is now overdue.

"National expectations are high," Islahuddin said. "As for personal ambition, who would not like to win the gold medal? It is important to everybody."

But to book a place in Saturday's final, they first have to pass Wednesday's test which pits Asian skill and flair against

European power and efficiency.

"We know how good the Germans are," Islahuddin said. "I can only say one thing — we will go all out."

The Germans have shown practically no weakness as they progressed with methodical thoroughness, winning four and drawing with Australia to justify their pre-tournament billing as favourites.

They have Carsten Fischer's deadly prowess at short corners, the devastating left-wing combination of Andreas Becker and Sven Meinhardt and a defensive powerhouse in Volker Fried.

And, after going home with silvers from both Los Angeles and Seoul, they are hoping third time will be lucky.

But coach Paul Lissek still hates his team being referred to as favourites and is plagued by doubt.

He was almost pleased when his team trailed briefly before beating Argentina 2-1 Monday, hoping the aura of favourites will dissolve a bit. "The semi-finals are difficult enough as it is," he said.

Pakistan, he said, had perfect individual players, who take a mile if given an inch, as they showed in a 6-1 thrashing of Spain on Monday, attacking

in waves once they saw where the gaps were.

Wasim Feroz, who with skipper Shahbaz forms a deadly left-wing combination, scored twice and Tahir Zaman hit a hat-trick, including two penalty strokes.

Goalkeeper Shahid Ali Khan played a crucial role throughout the league games, and short corner striker Khalid Bashir has been brilliant.

"Despite the brilliance Pakistan bring to the field, the Germans are still favourites," British coach Norman Hughes said after his defending champions went out in a 0-6 defeat to Australia.

"But when have the favourites ever won?" he asked. The Australians were tipped for the gold in 1984 and 1988, and both times they ended up with nothing.

That is a record the high-scoring Aussies would like to put straight when they face the Dutch world champions in the other semi-final.

Coach Frank Murray expects a tough match and that is what his Dutch counterpart Hands Jorritsma promises.

BOVELANDER THE KEY

Their semi-final could ride on how many penalty corners the Dutch force for Floris-Jan

Bovelander to hit home and how the Australian defence stands the test.

Bovelander, 26, has too often in the past made the difference between victory and defeat in matches involving the two sides.

"Australia will have to tire him out on the field and not give him too many to score from if they want to win," said Murray's predecessor Richard Agass who found Olympic gold elusive. "That is their only chance."

Australia, with Michael York, Kenneth Wark and goalkeeper Damon Diletti holding their own, have given little away, and Dutch coach Jorritsma is not expecting them to be too generous in conceding penalties.

"We will not get that many short corners, four or five may be," he reckoned.

The Dutch played four tests against Australia last year, winning one, losing one and drawing two but on Wednesday, Jorritsma promised: "We will play better than we did them."

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

Semi-finals: Australia vs Holland, Pakistan vs Germany. Classification matches: Britain vs New Zealand, Spain vs India, Argentina vs Malaysia, Unified Team vs Egypt.

Pakistan produce magic under pressure

BARCELONA, Aug 4: Tahir Zaman scored a hat-trick as Pakistan came through a daunting test of their nerve on Monday by beating hosts Spain 6-1 to book a place in the Olympic men's hockey semi-finals, reports AFP.

It brought Pakistan skipper Shahbaz Ahmed one step closer to his dream of winning an Olympic medal and calling it a day.

The Asian giants, three-time champions, were stretched to the full in the pressure cooker atmosphere of Terrassa before edging out Ignacio Escude and his bank of talented Spaniards to advance from Group B.

The win took unbeaten Pakistan to the top of their pool with 10 points from five matches and into a semi-final showdown with Germany on Wednesday.

Australia play the Netherlands to decide the other finalist.

With four wins out of four and an impressive goal difference, Pakistan were virtually sure of a place in the last four before the game began.

But world champions Holland advanced earlier in the day, knocking in six goals without reply against Malaysia to top the group on goal difference and leave Pakistan and Spain to fight it out.

Taking the field under immense pressure, Pakistan's vaunted forward line took time to get going, but once they exploded in the second half the Spanish collapsed despite vociferous crowd support.

Skipper and inside-left Shahbaz Ahmed, left-winger Wasim Feroz and inside-right Tahir Zaman were virtually unstoppable once they punched gaping holes through the Spaniards' defence.

Just one goal came in the first half, Zaman making no mistake with a 22nd-minute penalty stroke awarded when a defender carried the ball.

But there were five in a second-half flood after Jose Iglesias had levelled with an outstanding effort, entering the circle with a pass from Xavier Escude and finding the net from a difficult angle.

Crackers exploded in celebration for the Spanish

equaliser, but that was all there was to cheer for the home crowd as the Pakistanis produced wave after wave of attack.

Ten minutes after the interval, substitute Shahbaz Mohammad collected a pass from Hussain Musaddiq on the right and beat Santiago Grau to make it 2-1.

Four minutes later, Feroz hammered in a blinder in a scramble at the top of the circle. Zaman made no mistake in converting another penalty stroke, given for a goalkeeper's foul, a minute later.

Feroz had his name on the scoresheet a second time in the 21st minute, and Zaman completed his hat-trick and rounded off the tally seconds from time.

"We were under very great pressure," admitted Pakistan coach Islahuddin.

"They were all over us in the first few minutes and it was not until we scored that some of the pressure left."

"We scored six goals in the end but they were very good, very spirited."

Australia dashed Britain's dreams of retaining their Olympic hockey crown on Monday, a day on which three teams slammed in six goals each to reach the semifinals.

Australia, fourth in the last two Olympics, humiliated Britain 6-0 to secure a semifinal berth on Wednesday against world champions, the Netherlands.

The Dutch qualified for the last four with an electric 6-0

win over Malaysia in their last pool game, played partly during a thunderstorm.

Germany, widely tipped to inherit Britain's crown, were the only semifinalists to put on an uninspired display in their last pool game — beating unfancied Argentina 2-1.

Unlike the other three winners, Germany knew they could even have lost and still got through. Nevertheless, German coach Paul Lissek said he was disappointed.

"There were a lot of weak points in the team today," he said, adding: "It's good to lose a bit of the role we have had as favourites ... it's no dream team."

Australia scored from almost every chance they had against Britain, who have slipped down the world rankings since Seoul. The loss was Britain's worst to Australia since crashing 7-0 at the 1964 Olympics.

"We were disappointed with the scoreline," said British coach Norman Hughes. "We played some bloody good hockey."

As the goals piled up, Britain risked even more in attack, leaving gaps in defence.

Australia had only needed a draw to qualify for the semi-finals — Warren Birmingham, Jay Stacy and Stephen Davies ended up with two goals each.

In the Netherlands' match, midfielder Marc Delissen and forward Taco Van den Honert both scored hat-tricks.

NO FAVOURITES

"I like the Pakistani style of

play. I think it's the most spectacular," said Spanish coach Santi Cortes. "But for me there is no favourites for the gold among the four semi-finalists."

The four were all seen as pre-Olympic favourites for gold.

Asked who he would tip for gold, Britain's Hughes got one back against Australia.

"I still rate Germany as the favourites here. But when have the favourites ever won the Olympic titles?" he asked.

Australia were favourites in both 1988 and 1984.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Today's Cryptoquip clue: R equals U

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Rain delays Abahani's tie

Sports Reporter

The semifinal tie of the Moinuddin Gold Cup cricket tournament between Abahani Krira Chakra and the Karnataka State team was not held yesterday in Hyderabad, said a source close to Abahani.

The match, which fell through because of unplayable ground conditions following overnight rain, will now be held today.

Abahani, last year's Navana league runners-up, entered the semifinal by beating Maldives and MRF in this invitational knock-out tournament.

Players' pool likely today

Sports Reporter

Foreign players engaged by the different local clubs may not bother to shuttle between the capital and other parts of the country for 'easy cash' from next year.

The tail-piece of the meeting of the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board, held on Sunday, confirmed this speculation. Foreign players will have to take permission from their respective clubs as well as from the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board to play outside Dhaka.

Players, mainly from Sri Lanka, would regularly play part-time cricket outside Dhaka for ready money until last year.

Earlier the meeting decided on the guidelines for forming a players pool with the top local players. The pool is likely to be announced today.

The players' pool will fix a ceiling of three national players for every team.

For once the big clubs with all their financial clout will be restricted in their bid to skim the cream of the limited cricketing talent to enter the mad-rush for titles.

The BCCB will have to evolve effective measures to stop any attempt at 'retirement' by players from the national team to circumvent the purpose of the pool, thereby keeping ones options open for lucrative offers from the big clubs.

Pallab schools chess champ

Sports Reporter

National sub-junior champion Shawkat Hossain Pallab and runner-up Hossain Arif finished as unbeaten champion and runner-up respectively in the seventh Bata schools chess competition which concluded at the National Sports Council chess room yesterday.

Pallab, a student of Class Ten of the Dhaka Cotton Mills High School and Arif, a Class Nine student of the Green Herald School, received 44.5 and 43 points respectively in the tie-breaker after tying on seven points each at the end of the eight-round Swiss league meet.

Pallab beat Amir while Arif drew with Shakil in their final round encounters yesterday.

Abu Sufyan of the Hossain Ali High School and Nazrul Islam of the Bhasha Pradip School, who collected six and a half points each, secured the third and fourth positions respectively.

Ninety students representing 65 schools of the country took part in the meet organised by the Bangladesh Chess Federation.

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