

OLYMPIC SPECIAL



Hwang wins men's marathon gold for S Korea

BARCELONA, Aug 9: South Korea's Hwang Young-cho won the men's marathon the final event to be decided in the entire Olympics, today, reports AFP. Hwang dropped Japan's Koichi Morishita on the run up to the Montjuic Stadium after the two men had gone to the front halfway through the 42km race. He won in 2 hr 13 min 23 sec. Morishita won the silver and Germany's Stephan Freigang took the bronze.

Hwang, the 1991 World Student Games winner at Sheffield, England, was the second Korean to win the Olympic marathon.

The first was Kee Chung-Sohn who ran for Japan at the Berlin Olympics on 9 August 1936.

Close call for Heike Henkel

BARCELONA, Aug 9: Heike Henkel of Germany survived a crisis at 1.97m which she cleared on her third attempt, to win the women's Olympic high jump here yesterday, reports AFP.

Henkel, the world champion cleared 2.02m for victory. She was the last to enter the competition at 1.91m and then took a gamble by passing at 1.94m.

It looked as if she would not win a medal when she failed twice at 1.97m but plucked up her courage after a long wait because of the men's 5,000m race, to clear and go on to win.

Galina Astafet of Romania was second with a best jump of 2.00m. She was clear first time at every height to lead the competition until falling at 2.02m which she had never cleared before.

Cuba's Joanet Quinero won the bronze by clearing 1.97m. Former world champion Stefka Kostadinova of Bulgaria, whose world record of 2.9m set in the 1987 World Championships still stands, had to settle for fourth at 1.94m after falling three times at 1.97m which turned out to be the decisive height.

CHAMPIONS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

BARCELONA, Aug 9: Mongolian Pya-mbuu Tuul was blinded for 13 years by an accident at work. He regained the sight in one eye with a cornea transplant. Next came the marathon at the Barcelona Olympics, writes Reuter.

Briton Derek Redmond, determined to finish after pulling up with a hamstring injury, staggered in agony across the line in a crumpled embrace with his father who wore a baseball cap with the slogan "Just do it" emblazoned on it.

American Gail Devers had victory tantalisingly within her grasp when she hit the last hurdle at breakneck speed. She stumbled across the line in a flailing jumble of limbs, equally eager to finish at all costs.

The scourge of drugs may have cut its tawdry show across the Olympics; millionaire athletes may have been battling for gold just so they could win a better contract from their sponsors; but it was raw courage that captured the imagination.

The athletes, who conquered adversity to take part and then simply refused to give in, personified the Olympic ideal in its purest form. Their determination lingers in the memory.

Pya-mbuu Tuul echoed that ideal before Sunday's marathon. "My task is just to participate in it, not to win." Redmond went down as if shot by a pistol in his 400 metres semifinal. He got up, pushed medics away and staggered in excruciating pain down the track. The crowd went wild.

His father Jim leapt over the barrier to help his sobbing son across the line. "I just wanted to finish, it was as simple as that," he said.

Gail Devers, who almost lost both feet to a thyroid disease two years ago, clattered the last 100 metres hurdle but just kept tumbling like an agile gymnast to be fifth.

"It was obviously just not meant to be," she said philosophically.

Winning with pain as her coach applied ice packs to her back, she said: "I've got some bumps and bruises. I've had them before. I'll get over it."

Just getting to Barcelona was an achievement in itself for some. Others had to battle adversity when they got here.

Canadian world champion sculler Silken Laumann, her right leg shattered in a rowing accident before the Games, recovered in time to win a bronze medal.

American swimmer Ron Karnaugh walked proudly in the opening ceremony watched by his father who then suddenly died of a heart attack. He came to terms with his grief by competing in the Games.



Germany's Heike Henkel clears the bar in the final of the women's Olympic high jump competition in Barcelona on August 8. She cleared 2.02m to take the gold. — AFP photo

Legendary Lewis leaves his mark

BARCELONA, Aug 9: A split second after American teammate Dennis Mitchell slapped the baton into his tralling left hand, 100 meters from the finish of his third and most improbably Olympics, Carl Lewis hollered with joy. "Yes!" he screamed. And, even with arms and legs pumping furiously, a huge smile crossed his face. And again: "Yes!" His shining teeth were

bared. Not in the grimace of effort, or the strain of his incredible acceleration, unmatched by anyone. Lewis was flying on wings of laughter. And with each lengthening stride, he was leaving his indelible stamp on the Summer Games, writes AP.

The American came to Barcelona predicting a world record. He got one, as well as a gold medal he never expected. Now he has eight golds and a silver. No American track athlete has ever done better.

Mitchell had given him a one-stride lead over runners from Britain, Nigeria and Cuba in the men's 400-meter relay. End of contest. Lewis, with 70,000 people standing and cheering, finished six strides ahead of the Nigerian who put his team second.

His time, a world record 37.40 seconds. And the 31-year-old Lewis, who had qualified only in the long jump after a virus slowed him in the sprints at the US trials, had a second gold medal of the Barcelona games.

Mitchell, Leroy Burrell and Mike Marsh — the men who edged him out of the individual sprints in the US trials — shared the relay honours. But none ran faster on this night than Lewis, who made the teams as a replacement when Mark Witherspoon suffered a ruptured Achilles tendon a week ago.

Mitchell hollered at Lewis just before the handoff. "I was telling him, 'They're coming! They're coming! They're coming!' Mitchell said. 'You better run! You better run! You better run!'"

"Yes!" came the joyful reply. "That's exactly what I said," Lewis said. "When I first got it, I did scream. That was helping me bring focus to running fast. I put my hand back, the baton was there, and I was saying, 'We have the gold medal.'"

After flashing across the line, Lewis eased to a trot, then leapt straight up, again and again, when the world record was posted on the scoreboard. Pumping his arms several times, he then threw the baton into the crowd, turned and embraced his teammates.

"That finish line was the most special of them all," Lewis said, laughing again. "Because getting the record is incredible. It's definitely the one."

The mark broke the standard of 37.50 set by the United States at last year's World Championships in Tokyo. That team was the same as the current record-setters, except Andre Cason, not Marsh, ran the leadoff.

After his heartbreak in the US Olympic qualifying trials, Lewis, still the world record-holder in the 100, was left with only the long jump.

Fully recovered, he hoped not only to beat teammate Mike Powell, but to get the one world record that has eluded him throughout his career. The standard had been Bob Beamon's for 23 years, until Powell finally broke it on an electrifying night in Tokyo last year when Lewis barely missed it.

Lewis did edge Powell and won his third Olympic gold in the long jump, though winds and heat dashed his dream of finally claiming the record.

It may yet happen. Lewis' anchor leg in Estadi Olympic Saturday erased any thoughts that sprinter might be on the downside of his career. Twenty years ago, when Lewis was nearing his 11th birthday, he won the long jump at a junior track meet in Philadelphia. The man who presented his medal knew he had seen something special.

"You're really talented," Jesse Owens said. "You're a little guy, but you beat all the big guys."

Now, with eight Olympic golds, he has beaten even the great Owens' legend, even if America has been irritated over the years because Lewis did not act like humble Owens. Lewis has mellowed, and is more at ease with himself and the world. But his past outspokenness and different lifestyle have landed him in disfavor many times.

Owens, if he were alive today, likely would express appreciation for something other than Lewis' physical talent. Nobody has done more to make track and field a respectable profession, where the gifted can make a decent living.

Many Americans have conveniently forgotten that Jesse Owens, the great hero of the Berlin Games of 1936, quickly slipped from Olympic glory and was reduced to racing ponies for lunch money.

And for all his records and medals, Lewis says he mainly hopes he has made things better for his fellow athletes.

"If I helped change the sport," he said, "by creating more attention for it, by fighting drug use, by bringing more money into it, if I helped give the sport a voice ... then that's how I'd like to be remembered the most."

Boulmerka does it for her country

BARCELONA, Aug 9: As soon as she won the 1,500 metre race, Hassiba Boulmerka pointed to the letters on her vest and shouted the name for all the world to hear: "Algerie!", reports AP.

It was intended especially as a message of encouragement to the people of divided Algeria, where Boulmerka has been criticised by Islamic fundamentalists for exposing her bare legs and shoulders when she runs.

"This is a victory for all Algerians, men and women, without exception," she shouted after jogging a victory lap with the flag draped over her shoulders.

"We want an Algeria that's victorious, a solid Algeria. My victory confirms for all the Western world that Algeria can succeed."

Boulmerka, who won the 1,500 gold medal at the World Championships in Tokyo last year, took the lead just before the final turn and sped away to win by about 10 metres in 3 minutes, 55.30.

Lyudmila Rogacheva of the Unified Team won the silver in 3:56.91, and China's Qu Yunxia took the bronze in 3:57.08.

Algeria had a chance for a sweep of both 1,500 metre races, but world champion Noureddine Morcelid faded and finished only seventh in the men's event.

Boulmerka dedicated her gold medal to Mohamed Boudiaf, head of the High State Committee that has ruled the North African country of 25 million people since January. Boudiaf was assassinated June 29 in what authorities described as a conspiracy involving military officials and the presidential body guard.

Boudiaf, 73, was a hero of Algeria's war of independence from France. He returned from exile in Morocco after the military ousted President Chadli Bendjedid and blocked elections that Muslim fundamentalists were expected to win.

"Vive Algerie!" Boulmerka said. "Vive our martyrs. It's thanks to our martyrs that Al-

geria exists today." "This victory represents moral encouragement to the youth of Algeria," she said. "They should sacrifice, give it their all like I did, express themselves as best as possible in all fields."



HASSIBA BOULMERKA

Boulmerka became frustrated at persistent questioning about the role of women and politics in Algeria.

"I had a lot of pressure on me this year from people who tried to involve me in politics," she said. "I am not a politician. I'm just a little Algerian woman who's trying to inspire all Algerians without exception."

Drechsler, JJK have no hard feelings

BARCELONA, Aug 9: Heike Drechsler may have beaten Jackie Joyner-Kersey in the Olympic long jump, but she still believes the American is the greatest female athlete in the world, reports AFP.

Drechsler insisted the result could not detract from Joyner-Kersey's achievement in retaining the gruelling seven-event heptathlon earlier in the Games, the first woman ever to do so in an Olympic multi-events competition.

The German's sincere praise for her rival was mirrored by that coming the other way, as Joyner-Kersey told her: "You deserved the win and I'm very happy for you," before adding to anyone who would listen: "I'm glad to see her win the gold medal."

It was an illustration of a friendship that was underlined in the World Championships last year, when Drechsler was the first to reach JJK's side and comfort her after a bad ankle twist during the long jump final.

There was more than the usual empty magnanimity to the words when Joyner-Kersey accepted her Barcelona defeat by saying: "I'm happy for Heike. She's been in this as long as I have, and I've been fortunate enough to come out on top when we've previously met. This time it was her turn."

Joyner-Kersey's one regret was that her best jump of 7.07m was only good enough for third place, behind Drechsler's 7.14m and a leap of 7.12m by Ukrainian Inessa Kravets, representing the Unified Team.

But at least she now has a complete set of Olympic medals after three games, with three golds, one silver and one bronze.

Drechsler, who first became world champion at the age of 18 in 1983, admitted that she was relieved as much as elated at finally wresting an Olympic victory.

"I've waited a long time to win an Olympic gold medal. I've also waited along time to beat Jackie Joyner-Kersey, so I'm very pleased that I was able to do it in an Olympic final. But she is still a great athlete."

Bryzgina runs a brilliant anchor leg for CIS girls

BARCELONA, Aug 9: Olga Bryzgina ran a brilliant last leg to win the women's 4x400m Olympic relay gold medal for the Unified Team here yesterday, reports AFP.

She overhauled Rochelle Stevens of the United States on the finishing straight for victory in 3 min 20.20sec.

The American squad timed 3:20.92. Sally Gunnell, the 400m hurdles champion, clinched the bronze medal for Britain in 3:24.23.

Bryzgina, runner-up to France's Marie-Jose Perec in the individual 400m she had won four years ago, won the relay in exactly the same way she did in Seoul when she ran down Florence Griffith-Johnson of the United States on the last lap.

Owen Torrence, looking for a third gold medal, had given the Americans a short-lived lead with a tremendous second leg run.

By then the gold and silver medalists were well clear but Jenny Stoute pulled Britain into the bronze medal position on the third leg and Gunnell held on to the medal.

Cacho wins 1500m gold for Spain

BARCELONA, Aug 9: Unheralded Fermin Cacho ran the race of his life to win the men's 1,500 metres, the Olympic blue ribbon, for Spain here yesterday, reports AFP.

Cacho forced his way past Kenyan pacemaker Joseph Chesire with 250 metres to go and pulled away for a magnificent win in 3 min 40.12 sec.

Rachid Basir of Morocco with a very late run pipped Qatar's Mohamed Ahmed Sulaiman in the last two strides for the silver in 3:40.62.

Sulaiman timed 3:40.69 for Qatar's first Olympic medal.

Cacho ran the last lap in 53 seconds. Chesire had led the field all the way but could not respond when Cacho burst past and faded to fourth.

World champion Noureddine Morcelid, hampered by injury all season, failed to make it an Algerian double after the victory by Hassiba Boulmerka in the women's 1,500.

IAAF accepts Torrence apology

BARCELONA, Aug 9: Athletics authorities said yesterday they would take no action against US sprinter Gwen Torrence who charged that three Olympic rivals were drug cheats, reports Reuter.

Torrence, who won the women's 200 metres title on Friday, alleged after finishing fourth in the 100 final that three of her rivals had been on drugs.

Torrence is the 100 metres world silver medalist.

The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) called on the US Olympic Committee to ask Torrence to explain her statement and she later issued an apology.

"I have not accused specific athletes of cheating but my personal opinions have come across perhaps too strongly," Torrence said.

A senior IAAF official said that IAAF president Primo Nebiolo had accepted the explanation and no action would be taken.

Instant reward for Irish hero

DUBLIN, Aug 9: Michael Carruth, a national hero after winning Ireland's first Olympic gold medal since 1956, is already savouring the rewards of success, reports AP.

The 25-year-old soldier, a triplet and one of 10 children, was promoted after his win from corporal to sergeant in the Irish army in "recognition of the honour he has brought the defence forces and Ireland."

Thousands of neighbours and well-wishers staged a giant street-party outside the family home in the Dublin suburb of Greenhills after Carruth defeated Cuba's Juan Hernandez 13 points to 10 to win gold in the 67-kilogram class.

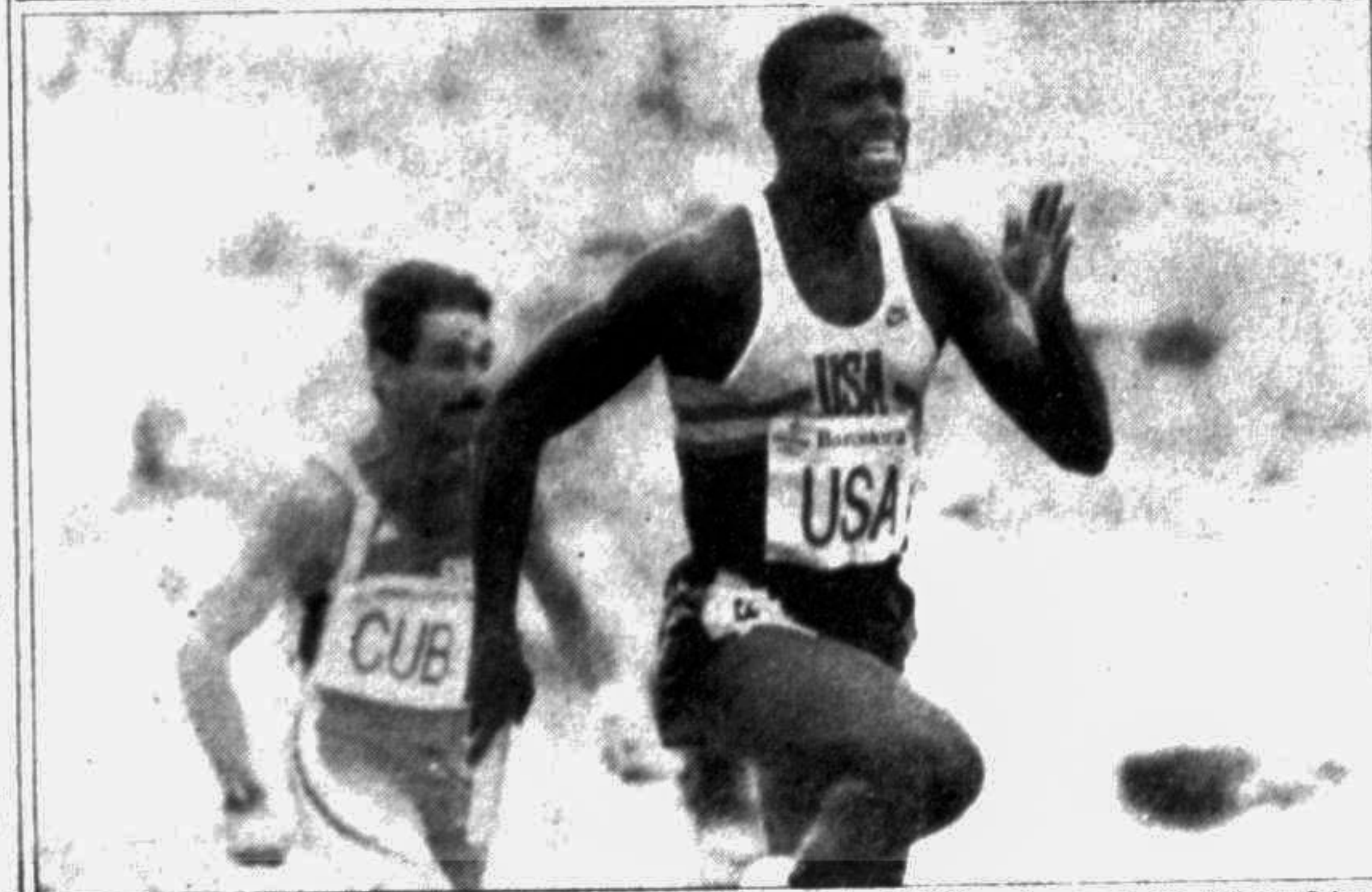
Carruth and Ireland's boxing silver medalist Wayne McCullough, from Belfast, will fly into Dublin Monday night. Thousands are expected at the airport.

A chain of seven Dublin pubs plans to sell beer at 1956 prices — about eight cents a pint — Monday to mark the win.

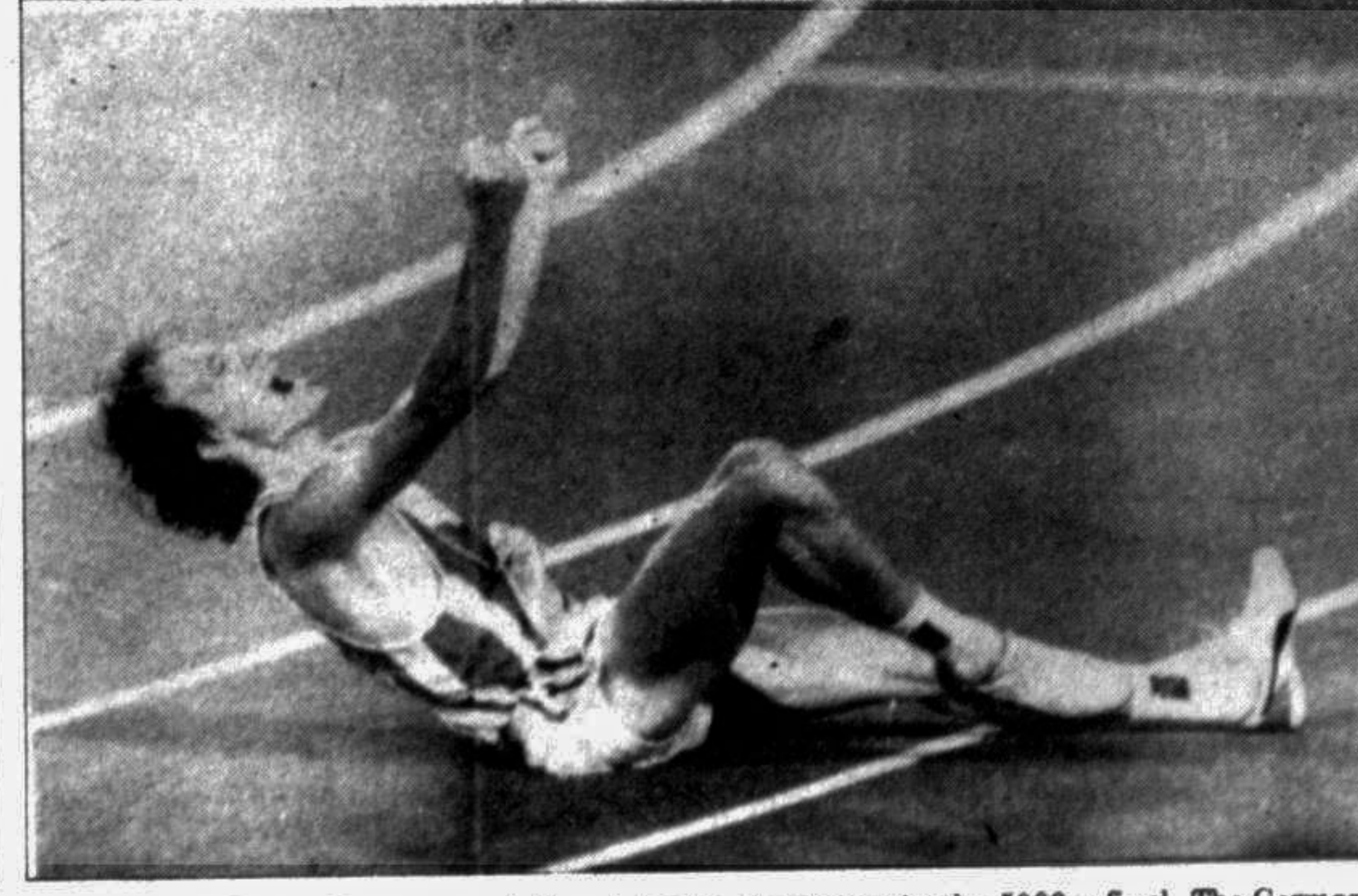
On Tuesday the two boxers will be driven through Dublin in an open-topped bus to a civic reception hosted by Lord Mayor Gay Mitchell.

Their success has also opened government coffers.

Pat Hickey, president of the Olympic Council of Ireland, said Sunday the Irish government had promised an extra 1.3 million to train 10 full-time athletes for the 1996 games in Atlanta.



Carl Lewis of the USA sprints the anchor leg of the men's 4x100m relay race on August 8 in Barcelona. Lewis helped the US team win the gold as well as set a new world record in 37.40 seconds. — AFP photo



A delighted Dieter Baumann noisily celebrates his victory in the 5000m final. The German won the Olympic gold on August 8. — AFP photo