

Chinese heroes turn celebrities

BEIJING, Aug 11: China's Olympic athletes returned to Beijing on Tuesday to a crowd of autograph-seekers and well-wishers bearing banners and flowers, reports AP.



Gold medalist Chinese women's platform diver Fu Mingxia signs autographs for People's Army officers at Beijing airport upon the Chinese team's triumphant return from Barcelona yesterday.

Li Tiejing, a member of the Communist Party Politburo, Zhang Baifa, deputy mayor of Beijing, and Yang Baibing, secretary-general of the Central Military Commission, were among more than two dozen officials who lined a red carpet to greet the athletes at the Beijing airport as two children's bands played.

Outside the ceremony area on the tarmac, a large crowd of sports officials, airport workers and nearby residents gathered with flowers and large red banners bearing slogans such as "Warmly welcome Chinese sports teams' triumphant return."

The group of 207 athletes, coaches and officials returned on a chartered Air China jet from Barcelona. A group of 261 athletes returned last Friday.

The nationally televised evening news flashed a news bulletin on announcing that the athletes landed in Beijing at 6:52 pm (1052 GMT).

"I'm so happy I'm back home" said Chen Yueling, 24, who won the gold in the women's 10-kilometre walk. "I kept thinking about coming home, I missed my mom."

Outside, her friend, Lu Zhongfang, waited to welcome her. She had traveled from Tianjin, about 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Beijing, to congratulate Chen in person.

"A gold is very hard to get. I really respect women like her who have made achievements in their profession," said Lu, an instructor at Tianjin Normal University.

The medalists met officials about a half-hour with officials before going back onto the tarmac to collect their suitcases and packages. Many had brought back large stereo systems.

As they walked out to the waiting buses, the most famous athletes, including divers Fu Mingxia, who won gold the women's platform, and Sun Shuwel, who won the gold in men's platform, were besieged by autograph seekers.

Brolin sidelined

STOCKHOLM, Aug 11: Sweden's leading striker Tomas Brolin will be out of action for at least six weeks following a knee operation.

Swedish national team physician Jan Ekstrand said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Brolin injured his right knee after colliding with a player during Sweden's match against Australia at the Barcelona Olympics.

"It is a serious injury for a soccer player," Ekstrand said. "He cannot put any weight on his right leg and has crutches and a brace. He has to rest for between six and eight weeks from now."

Brolin, 22, has now joined his Italian club Parma at a pre-season training camp in northern Sweden, Ekstrand added.

Brolin's three goals in the European soccer championships in June made him Sweden's top goalscorer in full international games, with a tally of 12 goals in 20 appearances.

SA to take part in World Cup

ZURICH, Aug 11: South Africa are being allowed to take part in the 1994 World Cup soccer competition, the International Football Federation (FIFA) said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

South Africa were readmitted to FIFA on July 3, ending a 18-year absence, and played their first international the same month against the 1990 World Cup quarter-finalists Cameroon.

A FIFA spokesman said teams could enter the competition, even at this late stage, in those federations where the preliminary matches had not yet started.

South Africa replace Sao-tome and Principe, who pulled out of Africa's Group D and will kick off their campaign away to Nigeria on October 10.

The other teams in the group are Congo and Libya.

FIFA retains age bar for booters

ZURICH, Switzerland, Aug 11: FIFA, world soccer's governing body, said Tuesday its under-23 age limit will remain in force for the soccer tournament at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, reports AP.

General secretary Joseph Blatter confirmed to reporters that FIFA will not seek to change the rule, a source of friction with the International Olympic Committee. FIFA's concern is to protect the World Cup as the world's premier soccer event.

FIFA's congress, which would have to approve a change, next meets in 1994. Blatter has said that is too close to the Atlanta Games.

Lawyers seek way out for Maradona

ZURICH, Aug 11: Lawyers for Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona on Tuesday proposed ways to end the impasse over his refusal to return to Italian soccer club Napoli, a spokesman for the world soccer body FIFA said, reports AP.

A Napoli club official, Giorgio Curti, held FIFA-mediated talks with two Maradona attorneys, Juan Marcos Franchi and Daniel Bolotinoff, at the organisation's Zurich headquarters.

The lawyers offered two possible solutions during a "serious discussion," FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren said: that Maradona return to Napoli or that his contract, which has one year remaining, be scrapped.

Both sides agreed to keep details secret, Herren said. No further meetings were immediately announced.



Members of the Nigerian women's 4x100m relay team scream after winning the bronze medal in Barcelona Saturday. The USA took the gold, and Unified Team the silver.

Commercialism clouds Olympic ideal

BARCELONA, Aug 11: The Olympic spirit is dead. It finally gave up the unequal fight against the terminal illness from which it had suffered since Los Angeles, and its passing was commemorated at the grandiose Games closing ceremony in Barcelona, reports AFP.

What has replaced it is something all together more in tune with modern times — spirit of commercialism and professionalism perfectly equipped to carry the Games screaming into the 21st century.

The malady took root in LA eight years ago and by the time Seoul came round four years later the signs of irrevocable decline were already evident. Ben Johnson was exposed as drugs cheat and professional tennis players joined the Olympic fray.

But the final nail was hammered into the coffin with the arrival of the basketball stars of the all-American "Dream Team" to the accompaniment of huge hype and controversy.

Their popularity with crowds everywhere they went was phenomenal, as were their on-court efforts which made for a great spectacle and the best sell-out show in town.

The trouble was they didn't mix with the other athletes staying in the Village. There was bad feeling that the millionaire elite, the Magic Johnsons and Michael Jordans, were spared the hardships of room-sharing and lack of air-conditioning in the comfort of their five-star hotel.

For all the talk of forcing all American athletes at future Games to live in the Village, the real point at issue was that they were there in the first place — professionals at the height of their sport competing for glory — and perhaps the increased popularity and sponsorship opportunities.

Even Steffi Graf, a multi-millionaire herself but content to rough it with the rest, had a harsh word or two for her fellow professionals. They complained that the heavy claycourts of Barcelona were designed to aid and abet the Spaniards to the gold.

She scoffed at Michael Chang's bizarre description of the surface as being like 'chocolate powder.' True pro-

professionals, said Graf, should be able to play in any conditions. Yet 'true professionals' are precisely what the Olympics never used to need, with spirited amateurs competing for the pleasure and the honour, now sadly an outdated concept of a bygone age.

However, the Barcelona Games, a personal triumph for IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, still retained a veneer of the old dignity and civilising influence of European history.

Atlanta in four years time promises to usher in an altogether new era, with the Games promising to be all fizzle and no substance in the camp of its largest sponsors, Coca Cola.

The fall-out from Barcelona will be both financial and political, but on a domestic not an international scale.

The Games themselves will, at the last estimate, make a six million dollar profit on the operating budget, but that does not take into account local, regional and national investment in the installations, for which many people believe Barcelona will be paying for a long time to come.

A popular image worn on T-shirts by the young and politically aware shows a man with a glum expression and his pockets turned out, under the legend "Barcelona '93, one year on".

The political benefits should offer Catalonia, which promoted its cause energetically on global TV, a greater degree of autonomy.

It will not have gone unnoticed that the Catalan people have taken the chance to display a fierce nationalism whenever the moment has arisen, and not merely by a strong display of flags throughout the city for the past month.

But on an Olympic level, the benefits are difficult to assess, for the Games have been as low-key a sporting event as any in living memory.

Drugs continue to rear their ugly heads, although this time it was the emergence of Clenbuterol as the designer drug par excellence, that dominated the news.

But even then, for all that British weightlifters Andrew Davies and Andrew Saxton were sent home and American hammer thrower Jud Logan was caught out. It was the

news from elsewhere that hit the headlines. In Germany Olympic absentee Katrin Krabbe was also found to have taken the steroid, which was for a long time believed to be undetectable — a myth now fully dispelled.

Drugs were also the bone of contention for American sprinter Gwen Torrence, who in a true sour grapes outburst after finishing out of the medals in the 100m, announced that two of the three women ahead of her were on drugs.

She later backtracked, particularly after the consolation of the 200m gold, and so escaped a possible six month suspension.

But the bad taste remained, given that the winner of the race was another American, Gail Devers, who had recovered from a serious debilitating illness, Grave's disease, to snatch the most dramatic and emotional gold of the Games.

Devers also featured in the other emotional high on the track, when she was on target for a world record in the 100m hurdles, only to hit the last barrier and allow Paraskevi Patoulidou to come from nowhere to become the first Greek woman to win a track gold.

Perhaps the most gratifying track medal was won by Algeria's Hassiba Boulmerka in the 1,500m. Boulmerka herself, while insisting she had no political axe to grind, dedicated her triumph to assassinated Algerian President Mohammed Boudiaf, a champion of enlightenment.

Another Arab gold medalist, men's 10,000m champion Khalid Skah of Morocco, proved to be the most unpopular winner in Olympic history. He was jeered and whistled at the medals ceremony after he had been reinstated following his controversial win over Kenya's Robert Chelimo, which clearly owed a lot to the dubious efforts of compatriot Hammou Boutayeb.

There was also the most heartening sight of the Games, one which epitomised the return of South Africa to the Olympic fold, as women's 3,000m silver medalist Elana Meyer joined arms with Ethiopia's Derartu Tulu and proclaimed the double triumph was for the whole of

Africa. If South Africa were making their first appearance for 32 years, the Unified Team, formerly the Soviet Union, was taking a final bow, and the major share of the medals with it before fragmenting into individual republics once more.

Ironically, the newly re-united Germany had a sobering experience as they failed to rise to their former level either in track and field or in the swimming pool. Now that doping is no longer quite the matter of course it was in the old East Germany performance has clearly suffered.

One member of the so-called Unified Team with cause to remember in Games is weightlifter Ibrahim Samadov, disgusted at finishing third, he created a stir by putting his bronze medal down on the rostrum. It was duly taken away from him and he faces a life ban for his pains.

Perhaps the success story of the Games was that of Spain, who outreached themselves with more than a dozen gold medals in every sphere from track to swimming and yachting to the national craze, football.

But surely the least enviable Olympic record went to China's Shang Shan.

She became the first and last woman to win the mixed skeet gold, fending off competition from more than 50 men and so holding the international Shooting Union up to ridicule.

They have decided to ex-Krabbe's trainer sacked

BERLIN, Aug 11: Katrin Krabbe's athletics club sacked her trainer today for giving the double world sprint champion the banned stimulant Clenbuterol, reports Reuter.

"Thomas Springstein irresponsibly betrayed his duty as trainer of caring for the athletes under his charge," the Neubrandenburg Sports Club (SCN) said in a statement.

Springstein admitted last week to buying Clenbuterol on the black market for Krabbe and teammates Grit Breuer and Manuela Deer. The drug, used for asthma treatment, is banned by the International Olympic not only damaged the athletes but also the club," the statement said.

Thrilling moments of athleticism

BARCELONA, Aug 11: Track and field provided some of the most thrilling moments at the Summer Games, reports AP.

Carl Lewis, sick and lacklustre at the US Olympic trials two months ago, outleaped world champion Mike Powell in the long jump.

Then king Carl anchored the 400 relay team that set a world mark of 37.40 seconds.

She then suffered a heartbreaking loss in the 100-metre hurdles, when she clipped the last hurdle and stumbled while leading. She fell and crawled

to the finish line fifth, in a remarkable 12.75.

"My goal here was to finish both races," she said. "In Seoul, I didn't make it to the finals. And here, even though I had to cross the finish line on my knees in the hurdles, I did that."

The biggest brouhaha was in the men's 10,000, when first place finisher Khalid Skah of Morocco was disqualified because of assistance from a teammate.

If the Cubans dominated boxing and the Unified Team gymnastics, the Americans excelled in track. The United States won 30 medals, including 12 golds. The men domi-

nated with 20 medals, two more than the combined total of such perennial powerhouses as the Unified Team (7), Kenya (8) and Germany (3).

Their eight golds were five more than the runner-up, the Unified Team.

In addition to the 400 relay of Lewis, Leroy Burrell, Dennis Mitchell and Mike Marsh, there were two more world records — the United States, 2:55.74 in the men's 1,600-metre relay, erasing a 24-year-old record, the oldest in the books, and the 46.78 by Kevin a Young in the 400-metre hurdles, erasing Edwin Moses' nine-year-old record.

Other Olympic marks were by Quincy Watts in the men's 400 (43.50), March in the men's 200 (19.73), Michael Conley in the men's triple jump (57 feet, 10 inches) and Jan Zelezny of Czechoslovakia in the men's Javelin (294.2).

Lewis' face was pure joy as he took the handoff in the anchor leg of the 400-metre relay and sprinted powerfully to a world record.

The face of British runner Derek Redmond was sheer pain. His hamstring snapped early in the 400, but his will did not.

He got up and dragged the damaged leg behind him, hoping toward the finish line. Soon, his father was on the track to help him get there. The fans were on their feet, cheering in admiration for a truly Olympian effort.

Lewis' exuberant performances left people wondering what he would have achieved if he had been healthy at the US Olympic trials and had qualified, as expected, in the 100 and 200 metres.

If he had made it in those events, Lewis might now have a record-tying nine Olympic gold medals or, possibly even 10.



CARL LEWIS ... top



SERGEI BUBKA ... flop

These were his seventh and eighth gold medals, putting him second on the all-time list behind finish distance runner Paavo Nurmi.

"I've said it all along: Carl is the greatest athlete I've ever seen." US men's team coach Mel Rosen said. "And he proves it time and time again."

At the other end of the scale were Sergei Bubka and Noureddine Morceli.

Bubka, history's greatest pole vaulter, had the embarrassing misfortune of failing to clear the bar in his first three vaults. He was out before he really began.

Morceli, unbeaten in two years in the men's 1,500 me-

talities, struggled home seventh.

US sprinter Gail Devers capped a remarkable comeback from Graves' disease, a life-threatening thyroid condition which nearly forced the amputation of her feet in March 1991. She won the greatest women's 100 ever, as five women broke 10.90.

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Connors fancied in battle of sexes

LOS ANGELES, Aug 11: Jimmy Connors said Monday he's always wanted a chance to be the unofficial women's tennis champion. He'll have a shot when he takes on Martina Navratilova in "The Battle of the Champions" exhibition match next month in Las Vegas, reports AP.

Connors is taking the dirt 5,00,000 winner-take-all challenge seriously, calling it "a war."

"I've been looking forward to setting this record straight since Billy Jean King played Bobby Riggs 20 years ago," said Connors who appeared at a news conference with Navratilova.

This match may give women something to shout about, plus it gives me the opportunity to do something I've never experienced in my career," said Navratilova, who has won 159 women's singles titles.

Connors, who's won 199 men's singles titles, will turn 40 three weeks before the Sept 25 meeting. Navratilova is 35.

Navratilova will benefit from an expanded court on Connors' side of the net with special lines drawn to give her a two-foot-wide advantage.

Connors will be allowed only one serve; she'll have the usual two.

When asked if the rules provide an unfair advantage to Navratilova, Connors responded: "I know what to do to combat the handicap. I like my shot. I wouldn't be playing if I didn't feel comfortable with my chances."

Juventus gems to dazzle Japan

TURIN, Italy, Aug 11: Italy's most titled soccer team, Juventus of Turin, will field its best 11, including newly-hired stars David Platt, Gianluca Vialli and Andreas Moeller, in the forthcoming Japanese tour, club officials announced Tuesday as the team prepared to fly to Osaka, reports AP.

The Italian major league squad, owned by the Agnelli family of auto tycoons, faces Japan's national team in two exhibition games in Kobe Friday and in Tokyo on Aug. 17.

Juventus star-studded lineup includes Italian virtuoso Roberto Baggio and defenders Julio Cesar of Brazil and Jurgen Kohler of Germany.

Moroccan runner blasts officials

RABAT, Aug 11: Salah Kokach, who came sixth in the Olympic marathon, blasted the government for its lack of support for Morocco's athletes, reports AFP.

"I want my money. I trained all on my own without practically any help from the Ministry of Sport," he said.

"I paid out of my own pocket for training. Now I want my receipts for expenses to be dealt with as quick as possible," Kokach said.

The marathoner, one of the few athletes to speak out against the government, was responding to press criticisms of Morocco's performance in Barcelona, where they bagged only three medals, including one gold.

As regards the forthcoming World Championships in Stuttgart, Kokach said: "The sports leaders must help me more."

Shriver recalls vintage touch

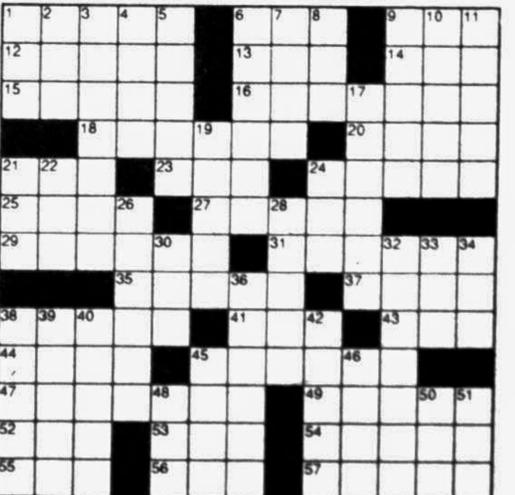
MANHATTAN BEACH, Calif., Aug 11: Former top ten player Pam Shriver played some vintage tennis to beat Marianne Werdel 6-2, 6-1, in the first round of the 350,000 dollar Virginia Slims of Los Angeles tournament on Monday, reports Reuter.

Shriver, 30, needed just less than an hour to defeat her American compatriot on the opening day of the week-long tournament.

Now ranked 33rd in the world, Shriver played consistent aggressive tennis to beat the 67th-ranked Werdel. "Afterwards Shriver could find nothing wrong with her effort.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 — Rica of France's Blanc Louis? 9 Yon bloke 12 Richard Dysard's show 13 Brewery product 14 E.T.'s craft 15 Author Jong 16 Straw hat 18 Sullen 20 Painter's medium 21 Gridlock 23 Lamb's dam 24 Tureen accessory 25 Lend a sly hand 27 Hose material 29 Peter Pan's creator 31 United Nations acronym 35 Subordinate to 37 Perlman of "Cheers" 38 Funda-



41 Follower of France's Blanc Louis? 43 Squid 44 Vipers 45 Cash in 47 Mark Spitz, e.g. 49 "A Boy — Sue" 52 — Diego 53 Feedbag 54 — barrel (disadvantaged) 55 Indivisible 56 Harvest goddess 57 Festive 1 Key: Fr. 2 "Concentration" conjunction? 3 Like a successful dieter 4 Filled tortilla 5 Cognizant 6 A film Lincoln 7 Sultry Sommer 8 Mainlander's souvenir 9 Like mid-August 10 Beatles' "If —" 11 Code name? 17 Loud 19 Had 21 Poke 22 "The — Daba Honey-moon" 24 Actor Chaney 26 Cliche 28 Sensational 30 Letter-head abbr. 32 Soft gleam 33 100 yrs. 34 "Woodman, Spare That Tree" tree 36 Puts forth 38 Low singer 39 Nile dam 40 Book-binder's strip 42 Poison 45 Harvest 46 Hang-over? 48 Meadow sound 50 Blow it 51 Calendar fraction

CRYPTOQUIP VWCHPNASF CPVDFPXXPN AWN PFPQXNOQOJCD QWKPNPH QSNNPCX PKPCXD Today's Cryptoquip clue: Q equals C 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.