



(From left to right) Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas handing over the Sixth SAF Games torch to the Education and Sports Minister of Tamil Nadu, Prof K Bonnusamy, who attended the closing ceremony on behalf of the mayor of Madras. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) chief B Adityan and president of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) Sheik Ahmed Al Fahd Al Sabah are also seen. — Star photo

Bimal, Shahana best athletes of Bangladesh

Pastest man of South Asia sprinter Bimal Chandra Tarafdar and shooter Kazi Shahana Parveen were adjudged the best sportsman and sports-woman of Bangladesh in the Sixth SAF Games, reports BSS.

The two athletes will be awarded with crests by Bangladesh Sports Journalists' Association at a function later.

Bimal won the gold in the men's 100m sprint in a record time of 10.61 seconds to achieve the rare feat.

Shahana earned a gold medal in standard rifle in shooting.

Mohun Bagan enter DCM semis

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Mohammedan Sporting, Calcutta and Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) played out an exciting 2-2 draw in a high-tension quarter-final league match today to share points and help Mohun Bagan squeeze through to the DCM football semi-finals here, reports PTI.

Though Mohammedan Sporting finished with three points, the same as Mohun Bagan, the latter qualified by virtue of a better goal average.

The match was halted for about 15 minutes in the second-half following rioting by a large section of the crowd who were agitated over disallowed goal by referee B Chauhan.

Earlier, Tousef Jamal put Mohammedan Sporting ahead in the 12th minute heading in a defence splitting cross from Mushtaq Ali.

Strengthening their defence and coming up with better co-ordinated moves in the second half PSEB looked all set to overcome the first half deficit and they did as Dhanwant Kumar struck 11 minutes into the second half to equalise.

Twelve minutes later Dhanwant slammed in again past an advancing Debashish Mukherjee to consolidate the team's position.

But Mohammedan Sporting bounced back into the game as Tousef Jamal restored parity in the 71st minute through a deftly executed goal.

Varteks Club of Croatia will now play Royal Nepal Airlines in the first semifinal tomorrow while Mohun Bagan will take on JCT, Phagwara in the second semifinal on Wednesday.

Brazilians pick their WC XI

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 27: Rio soccer fans, in a poll released Sunday, chose the team they would send to the 1994 World Cup and their choices were very different from the squad picked by manager Carlos Alberto Parreira, reports AP.

The poll by the Rio daily O Globo showed the following roster:

Lineup: Gilmar (Flamengo), Cafu (Sao Paulo), Ricardo Rocha (Santos), Rogerio (Flamengo), Leonardo (Sao Paulo), Cesar Sampaio (Palmeiras), Mauro Silva (La Coruna, Spain), Marquinhos (Flamengo) and Zinho (Palmeiras); Beбето (La Coruna, Spain) and Romario (Barcelona, Spain).

Rio fans chose three players from Flamengo, the city's most popular team. Goalkeeper Gilmar, defenseman Rogerio, and midfielder Marquinhos. They received more votes than Parreira's choices for goalkeeper Taffarel (Reggiana-Italy), defenseman Ricardo Gomes (Paris St Germain), and team captain midfielder Raul (Paris St Germain).

Rio fans also chose Cesar Sampaio, midfielder of the 1993 Brazilian champs Palmeiras over Parreira's choice Dunga, of Stuttgart, Germany.

Fans agreed with Parreira, that Spanish league heroes Beбето and Romario should be on the national team, but the fans would move Beбето to midfield, with top sub Edmundo, scoring sensation of the Palmeiras national champs, forming a front line with Romario.

Edmundo and Romario are former teammates on the Rio Vasco club, and Romario has publicly asked Parreira to play Edmundo together with him.

A mixed Games for the hosts

Sports Reporter

From the viewpoint of chronological order in the medals table, the just-concluded Sixth SAF Games have not marked any spatial improvement for the hosts.

Bangladesh have finished fourth, following champions India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In the fifth Games in Colombo,

64 medals from seven disciplines that year, a feat they emulated in the sixth version of the Games.

The increase in the number of disciplines did not really serve the purposes of the hosts. India, the traditional super power of the biennial sporting carnival, made a clean sweep in judo, the newly-introduced discipline. Tennis and football remained the untouched terrains, and only pinched and raffish success was achieved in disciplines like kabaddi, volleyball and table tennis.

The biggest source of disappointment was, of course, football.

Ranked by FIFA only recently above any other of their South Asian neighbours, Bangladesh managed the sixth position in a competition of six teams? Prepared, perhaps in the best way over the longest time in the whole history of Bangladesh's football, the team put the whole nation in a pool of despair.

The FIFA coach from Switzerland Oldrich Svab who imparted two and a half months of concentrated training at the farway Bangladesh Kriya Shiksha Protisthan at Savar, attributed the reasons of a goal-less draw with the Maldives in the opening encounter to sheer bad luck. But the footballers left no place to retreat for the poor coach in the second match when they lost to Nepal by a solitary goal. It was heart break for the millions of soccer crazy people of the country because the defeat meant an ouster for Bangladesh from perhaps the weakest international football meet.

The hostile crowd reaction, the anger of the football buffs, was a study in modesty. Because Bangladesh just did not play well enough to avoid a defeat that day. The Nepalese played to a plan and defeated the hosts in intelligence, cohesion and skill. Too many underserving apologies, replete with excuses like tension, were sought for our footballers, and none had any validity. Because the pressure, the tension of winning by a big margin to earn a slot in the final, was something they asked for. Luck or no luck, they had no business to settle for a draw against an unfancied team in familiar conditions and before a partisan crowd.



Smarting under the reason-betraying debacle of the footballers, the hosts got soothing salve when Bimal Chandra Tarafdar, the 21-year-old BKSP student won the men's 100m sprint to emerge as the fastest man of South Asia. It was great gain for the hosts because not only had Tarafdar set a new SAF record by clocking 10.61 seconds, Bangladesh had actually got a gold in athletics after a lapse of four years.

The late Shah Alam, who twice won the honour of being the fastest man of South Asia, had brought the last gold for Bangladesh from athletics in 1987, following his similar feat in the second Games in Dhaka.

Bimal's achievement in the just concluded Games proved a good omen for Bangladesh as the shooters, who had brought four golds on the second day of the Games, not to forget swimmer Mizanur Rahman Qarar's record breaking feat, added two more, with another one coming from boxing.

Over-confidence costs India dear

By Manash Chakraborty

There is often a slip between the cup and the lip and India, the soccer giant of South Asia, realised it on Sunday in the true sense of the term. They forgot that until the last whistle blows the match does not end. And for that they paid a heavy price.

Nepal, who won the championship once, and that too on their own ground, should be congratulated. To them, it was as good as winning the World Cup. Trailing by a first half goal, and then again conceding one eight minutes from time, they not only equalised, but fought well to push the match into the tie-breaker, in which they excelled.

The Nepalese victory, certainly the best in their football history, owed much to their never-say-die spirit and the way they capitalised on the dead-ball situation. Both of their

goals came from the last weapons of modern football, that is, corners, free kicks and penalties. Mani Shah's free-kick was a gem of a goal and simply world class. But apart from scoring the goal, Mani was otherwise off colour, and that left the Indian defence in a holiday mood, particularly in the first quarter of the match.

But then just as life is too big, so too, is a football match. India, leading by an opportunistic goal by Tajinder Kumar, the highest scorer of the tournament, became over-confident and allowed the Nepalese to grab the midfield. Akl Ansari and Tajinder are both attacking medics and on them the Indian coaches bestowed the duties of snatching and blocking in the midfield, but that was not to be. And so the Nepalese midfielders, led by Umesh Pradhan, were very much in the game. The Indian custodian Hemant Dora was a bundle of nerves

throughout the match, because of which the Indian defenders could not come forward to help the attacking line.

Nepal created most of the chances and they could easily have finished the match within the scheduled time had their strikers, especially Basant Gurung, not missed the gilt-edged chances.

The Indian attack was unimaginative and lacked thrust and penetration. Only Gunabir Singh was a threat to the Nepal defence in which Raju Sakya, easily the man of the match, stood like an Everest. Still Bhupinder Thakur got the rosy chances of the day and missed, and those cost the Indians heavily. Even then, India could have clinched the issue in the tie-breaker, but three of their shooters missed the target. And so, India had to be content with a silver medal only. Better than Colombo, at least!



DOES THIS NEED A CAPTION? A section of the spectators put up this banner to vent their feelings towards the failure of the national football team to reach the final during the closing ceremony of the Sixth SAF Games at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. — Star photo

Skah's sixth

HOUILLES, France, Dec 27: Khalid Skah of Morocco won the Houilles cross country, in the Paris suburbs, for the sixth year running on Sunday, reports AFP.

Result:
Men (9.6 km)
1. Khalid Skah (Morocco) 26 min 29 sec. 2. Addis Abebe (Ethiopia) 28:46. 3. Salah Hiesou (Morocco) 28:55. 4. Ismael Kirui (Kenya) 27:25. 5. Elarbi Khattabi (Morocco) 27:29. 6. Abdel Aitour (France) 27:34. 7. Bruno la Stum (France) 27:44. 8. Dominique Chauvelier (France) 27:53. 9. Pascal Thiebaut (France) 28:00. 10. Cephas Matabi (Zimbabwe) 28:08.

Women (6.3 km)
1. Saïda Kouhal (Morocco) 21:08. 2. Irena Kazkova Gras (France) 21:34. 3. Martine Javerzac (France) 21:56. 4. Corinne Barbazanges (France) 22:06. 5. Christine Mallo (France) 22:13.

Chance of a life-time

WASHINGTON, Dec 27: Organizers of a planned major football league in the United States hope to ride the World Cup's coat tails to success in a nation where the event is largely being ignored, reports AFP.

Officials of major league soccer plan to name their 12 cities for the inaugural 1995 season before next June's opening of the World Cup.

"There are marketing opportunities relating to ticket sales and sponsors we can take advantage of," spokesman Bill Sage said.

The nine World Cup host cities and four 1996 Olympic tournament preliminary venues are among 40 possible franchise sites visited by organizers.

To qualify, cities must have at least 10,000 season ticket subscriptions at 75 dollars for adults and 25 dollars for children by May 15.

Selling the sport has been difficult. A poll last month showed 87 per cent of the population had no idea the World Cup was coming to the United States. More than half said they would not be interested match or watching on television.

While 500 million people watched the World Cup draw Sunday from Las Vegas, only 315,000 viewers did from across the United States.

The draw received front-page coverage in some newspapers, but columnists such as Thomas Boswell of the Washington Post were typical.

"Soccer should remember that America doesn't owe the World Cup anything," Boswell wrote. "Few of us know who won the last World Cup in 1990. We're not embarrassed about it. Nor should we be."

"It's America's job to play a polite host," he added. "But it's soccer's job to prove why we should waste one minute of time learning about yet another sport."

Ince saves M United

LONDON, Dec 27: Manchester United midfielder Paul Ince fired on 88th minute equaliser as the English Premier League champions and leaders escaped with a 1-1 draw against Blackburn at Old Trafford on Sunday, reports Reuter.

United were in jeopardy of only their second defeat in 22 league games this season — and their first at home in all competitions for 14 months — when England international Ince came to the rescue.

Ince's goal cancelled out a 15th minute strike by forward Kevin Gallacher, and put United 13 points ahead of second-placed Leeds. Third-placed Blackburn are 14 points off the pace with a game in hand.

The Christmas holiday league programme had opened earlier in the day with Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar producing a brilliant display to enable his side to salvage a 0-0 draw at Sheffield United.

Midfielder John Williams made the first goal and scored the second as Coventry beat Wimbledon 2-1 away in the other Premier League fixture.

United's equaliser came during a tense climax in which the title holders gambled by sending everyone, including their Denmark keeper Peter Schmeichel, forward for a Lee Sharpe corner.

Schmeichel failed to make contact, but Gary Pallister headed goalwards and Brian McClair forced a reflex save from Tim Flowers, only for Ince to hook home the rebound inside the goal.

Midfielder David Batty was the architect of the Blackburn goal that stunned the Old Trafford fans, wriggling past a challenge from Mark Hughes to find Gallacher, who was racing down the right.

United were well below their best and, although they stepped up the pace after half-time, Flowers did not have to make his first real save of the game until the 78th minute when he dived to touch away a 25-metre shot by Wales forward Ryan Giggs.



An impressive march past by the participants from the seven SAARC nations — Nepal, Pakistan, India, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh — during the closing ceremony of the Sixth SAF Games at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. — Star photo

SAF Games remain very much an Indian domain

By Mir Ashfaqur Zaman

With unprecedented fireworks igniting the night sky in a blaze of colours, the Sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, the eight-day sporting spectacle involving Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh, came to an end yesterday, marking another Indian dominance for the sixth successive time.

The Indians reigned in all the events except boxing to finish atop the medals table with a collection of 61 golds, 59 silvers and 41 bronzes.

Pakistan, who had languished towards the bottom of the table for most of the meet, made a late surge, collecting as many as 21 gold medals on the last two days, to knock Sri Lanka off the second position. They finished with a total haul

of 23 gold, 22 silver and 21 bronze medals to 21 golds for Sri Lanka.

The Pakistani boxers ruled the ring in style and won nine of the 12 titles on offer. The other three were evenly shared by India, Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh.

The Lankans who, in the light of their performance in the previous Games, put up quite a dismal showing, had followed India till the penultimate day of competitive interest when a late Pakistani revival spoiled everything. However, they continued their strong showing in the track and field events, bagging twelve of the 32 golds at stake.



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Baggio joins elite club

PARIS, Dec 27: Italy's Roberto Baggio, the pony-tailed versatile forward from Juventus Turin, won the "Golden Ball" award as the European soccer player of the year with the results announced Sunday, reports AP.

Baggio, the first Italian to win the award in 11 years, received 142 points in a poll of European soccer coaches publications by France Football magazine.

It was the second major honour in a week after he was named World Player of the Year, by the sport's governing body, FIFA, last week at the World Cup draw in Las Vegas.

Baggio, 26, will lead the Italian team to the final round of the World Cup in the United States next summer. He currently has nine goals, tied for second in the tough Italian league where his club is in third position.

Anand stays ahead

GRONINGEN, Netherlands, Dec 27: Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand drew with Latvian Alexei Shirov on Sunday to hold his lead at the 230,000 Professional Chess Association qualifier, reports AP.

Shirov, playing black, used the rarely-used Pirc defence to counter Anand's king pawn opening and appeared to surprise the Indian, who settled for a draw after only 16 moves.

"I wanted to play the Austrian attack, but I feared he had prepared something for that so I played it safe," Anand said after the game. "I must admit my theory on Pirc is not very up-to-date."

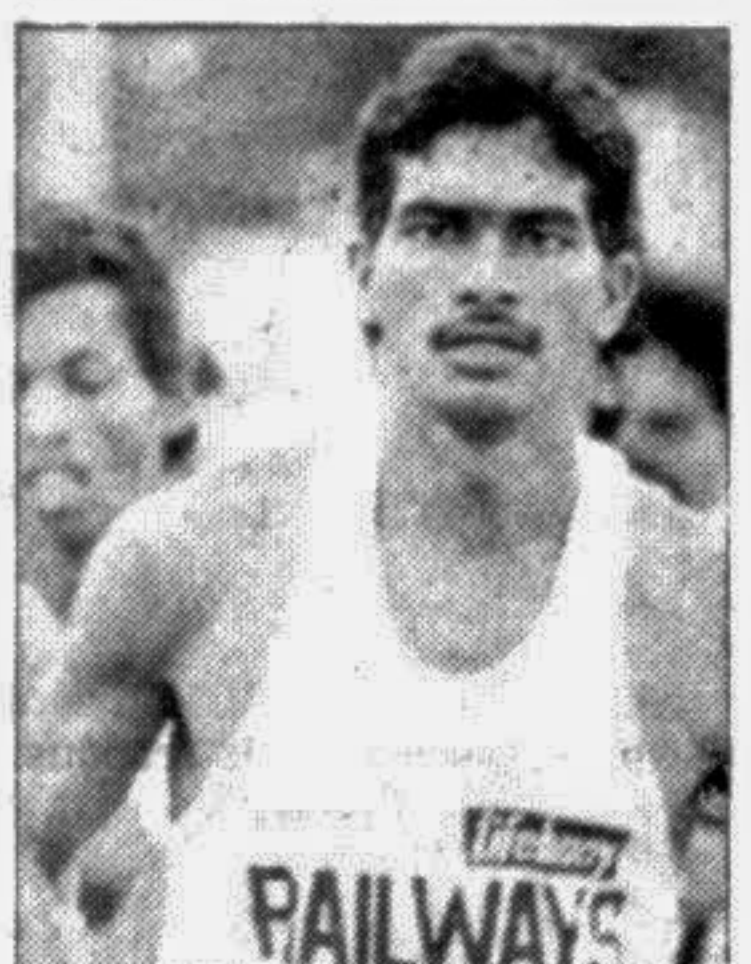


DAMYANTHI DARSHA

turned home empty-handed. For Maldives, the outcome should be quite disappointing since they fielded a 171-member squad.

Twenty-eight records were set in the biennial Games, 16 in track and field, eight in shooting and the rest in swimming. Mizanur Rahman Qarar of Bangladesh set the pace on the opening day of the meet when he clinched the first swimming gold in the 200-metre breaststroke with a time of 2:38.38 seconds. Indian 14-year-old wunderkind Jai Abhijith tumbled another previous mark on the same day with a 16:53.85 seconds effort in the 1,500-metre freestyle.

Qarar's fellow-BKSP student Bimal Chandra Tarafdar sent a wave of jubilation across the country when he became the fastest man of South Asia, winning the men's 100m sprint gold with a record time of 10.61 seconds. Tarafdar, the 21-year-old making his debut at the international level, in the process, became the second Bangladeshi after the late lamented Shah



BAHADUR PRASAD

Sebastina Xavier, India's Asian Games veteran, clinched four golds to end as the highest individual gold winner in the event.

Xavier, the balding natant from Kerala, however, couldn't set any new record. His teenage teammate Abhijith scooped up two gold medals to show why he is rated as one of the prospective swimmers of India. Abhijith, Xavier's fellow Keralite, also bagged one bronze.

Pushpamali, the ever-smiling Sri Lankan girl, emerged as the outstanding shooter of the Games with a haul of three gold medals and two silvers.

Two years from now, Madras will host the seventh Games, but there the number of participating nations will rise to nine as Uzbekistan and Afghanistan were recently given the SASF membership. India are expected to dominate again on their home ground. However, with new participants coming in from the two new members, there would surely be a change in the degree of their domination.



An AFP file photo dated June 30, 1990 shows Italian forward Roberto Baggio in action against Ireland held during the World Cup Italia 90. Baggio, who plays for Juventus, has been voted European-Player-of-the Year by a French football magazine.