



France's 400m Olympic champion Marie-Jose Perec coasts to an easy victory in her heat event at the European Championships in Helsinki yesterday. She is currently based in the United States. — AFP photo

Regis forced to withdraw

HELSINKI, Aug 8: Britain's sprint squad suffered a second major setback at the European Championships when defending champion John Regis was forced to pull out of the 200 metres on Monday because of injury, reports Reuter. A day after sprinter Solomon Wariso was pulled off the team after testing positive for a banned stimulant, Regis said he was unable to run because of a painful Achilles tendon injury in his left leg. "I'm gutted. I'm bitterly disappointed," said Regis who had showed some brilliant form in the last few weeks, clocking a personal best and British record of 19.87 seconds at the Sestriere meeting in Italy on July 31. "I was the defending champion and must have been in line for a medal. But you have to take the rough with the smooth in this business." Regis said the injury flared up when he was running and competing in Monte Carlo last week. He said he had been told

that, with treatment, he could be fit for the Zurich Grand Prix, the richest meeting in athletics, on August 17 and for the Commonwealth Games later this month. Regis's performance at altitude in Sestriere was the ninth fastest of all time. He won four

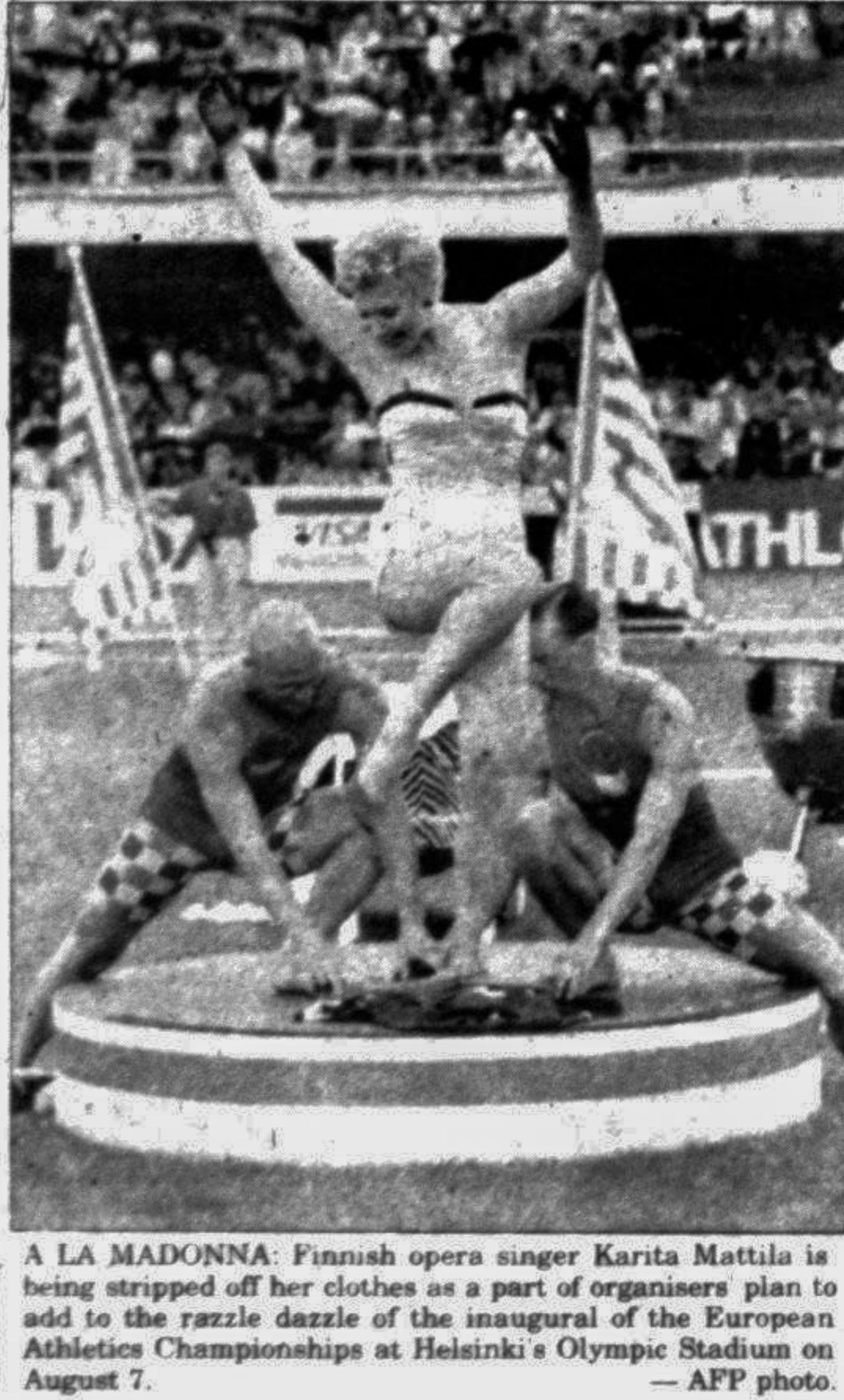


JOHN REGIS medals at the 1990 European Championships in Split — golds in the 200 and 4x400 metres relay, a silver in the 4x100 relay and bronze in the 100 metres.

Rosy prospect for hosts

JAKARTA, Aug 8: With some top overseas players not playing, Indonesia's Joko Suprianto and Susi Susanti have emerged as likely favourites for the men's and women's badminton crowns in the Indonesia Open starting on Wednesday, reports Reuter. Organisers of the 166,000 dollars championships in the Japanese city of Yogyakarta have given assurances that measures have been taken to prevent a repeat of unruly crowd scenes that marred Indonesia's victory in the Thomas Cup final against Malaysia in Jakarta in May. Top Malaysian players, including Rashid Sidek and Ong Ewe Hook, will miss the August 10-14 championships ahead of this month's Commonwealth Games in Canada. Organisers were quoted as saying the official Antara news agency. China's Ye Zhenyong, who won the 1993 women's Indonesia Open title by beating Susanti, will also be absent, organisers added. Denmark's Thomas Stuer-Lauridsen is another absentee. He withdrew on Sunday from the World Cup final in Vietnam after breaking a leg while playing against Indonesia's Meriyanto Arbi. Stuer-Lauridsen had beaten Suprianto, the world number one, in the semifinal. Susanti, the world and Olympic champion, took the women's crown defeating South Korea's Bang Soo-Hyun. Sources close to the organisers said Suprianto, whose compatriot Alan Budi Kusuma won last year's Indonesia Open men's title, and Susanti were likely to be the number one seeds. Indonesia has six of the world's top 10 badminton players.

4X100 relay and bronze in the 100 metres. His withdrawal was a major blow to the British sprint relay squad in Helsinki and the team as a whole. Britain used to be rely largely on middle-distance runners like Seb Coe, Steve Ovett and Steve Cram to bring home the medals, now, the sprinters form the strongest part of their squad. The second day of the championships were also a disappointment for France's 100 hurdles defending champion Monique Ewanje-Epee who crashed out of the competition in the heats. Ewanje-Epee, who has been struggling to regain top form after taking a break to have a baby last season, could only finish fifth in her heat in 13.29 seconds. The time was not fast enough to seal a place in the semifinals. But Olympic champion Mari-Jose Perec gave the French more satisfaction by cruising through her 400 metres heat to reach the semifinals with 51.87. Defending men's 400 metres champion Roger Black gave Britain some small consolation when he easily booked his place in the semifinals with a first-round victory of 45.88. But the British were looking to world and Olympic champion Linford Christie to lift their mood in the 100 metres semifinals and final later in the day.



A LA MADONNA: Finnish opera singer Karita Mattila is being stripped off her clothes as a part of organisers' plan to add to the razzle dazzle of the inaugural of the European Athletics Championships at Helsinki's Olympic Stadium on August 7. — AFP photo.

Anand, India's killjoy

HYDERABAD, India, Aug 8: Indian chess fans were in mourning Monday after local hero Vishwanathan Anand was ousted in the World Chess quarter-finals here, reports AFP. The 24-year-old Grandmaster's unexpected defeat by Gata Kamsky of the United States on Sunday crushed India's hopes of throwing up a champion to win the FIDE (International Chess Federation) world title. Chess administrators and fans had been confident Anand, who held a 6-1 career record against Kamsky before their latest meeting, would progress to the semifinals and take a shot at the title. Their hopes were dashed when the 20-year-old Kamsky pulled the rug from under Anand's feet, staging a spectacular comeback after trailing by two points midway through the match. Kamsky levelled scores by winning the sixth and seventh games of the eight-round match before wrapping up the unpredictable speed chess tiebreaker which had been billed as Anand's strong point. "I am sorry," the usually reclusive Kamsky said soon after his victory, knowing he had dealt Indian hopes a big blow. "I was prepared to lose. I hoped for a miracle. In the end, I was lucky," he said. Indian national champion Pravin Thipsay, a close friend of Anand, said the defeat would put Indian chess behind by a few years. "If Anand had won here, there would have been tremendous interest in the semifinals," Thipsay said. "The game's popularity in the country was directly related to how Anand fared. The chess boom has been delayed. I am not sure if it will pick up again." Probably the worst hit by Anand's defeat was Hyderabad-based industrialist Ravi Sanghi, who pledged 500,000 dollars to host the semi-finals here early next year in the hope that Anand would qualify. Sanghi said he was disappointed at the setback, "like any other India," but promised to stand by his financial commitment. The semi-finals are scheduled to be held from February 4-25 next year. The draw for the semi-finals, involving Kamsky, Boris Gelfand, Valery Salov and official world champion Anatoly Karpov — all from the former Soviet Union — will be made here on Tuesday.

Chinese cagers cause upset

HAMILTON, Ontario, Aug 8: Few predicted China stood any chance for a medal at the World Championship of Basketball. The Chinese may still come away empty, but they're one of eight teams that can still win one. China beat Spain 78-76 Sunday to advance to the quarterfinals for the first time, ensuring their best finish ever in a major international competition. As the gold medal was awarded to the United States the day the so-called "Dream Team II" roster was announced, and the silver was pretty much given to Croatia when their National Basketball Association stars committed to play, the bronze was up for grabs for a small group and China were not among them. Most observers said China would do well finishing in the top 10, something they missed by four places in the 1990 World Championship. They finished ninth in 1986. Now they can do no worse than eighth. "I am very proud of my team," coach Jiang Xingqiu said. "I think these victories show how really hard the players have worked in training. Now we have to be careful for each game." The round-robin quarterfinals start Monday with China playing Croatia and Greece meeting Canada. The other pool starts Tuesday with the United States playing Australia and Puerto Rico against Russia. The top two teams in each group advance to Saturday's semifinals and the gold medal will be awarded next Sunday.

Lough, Britain's new miler?

HELSINKI, Aug 8 (AFP): The names slip off the tongue — Steve Ovett, Sebastian Coe, Steve Cram, Gary Lough... Gary who? Only the most devoted athletics fan — and around 1,000 people in a small village in Northern Ireland — will have heard of him. Yet he goes into this week's European championships facing one of the hardest tasks of all, burdened by Britain's legendary middle distance success. Lough is — literally as well as metaphorically — a torch bearer in an event, the 1,500m, that was once synonymous with British success, starting with Roger Bannister's mile record 40 years ago. More recently, Coe, with Olympic 1,500m gold medals in Moscow and Los Angeles, Ovett, the 800m winner in Moscow, and Cram, the 1983 1,500m world champion, have continued the legend. There was even Tom McKean, the European 800m champion four years ago, although his form has collapsed recently. Yet the 24-year-old Lough, already through to the final, began this season as a nobody, despite a bronze medal in the World Student Games last year. His chance came when, fifth choice for the European Cup, he was drafted in at the 11th hour because of injuries and unavailability. While Britain's athletics chiefs wrung their hands trying to fathom out why their source of world-class 800 and 1,500m runners had run dry, Lough got down to business by finishing third. He then bettered his personal best by five seconds to 3 min 35.83 secs at Crystal Palace, coming third to Nouredine Morcelli and forcing every journalist at the stadium to take note. Lough knows all about obscurity. His hometown of Ballygally, with its 1,000 inhabitants, only has streetlights over a 300-yard stretch, forcing Lough to carry a torch with him during winter, training runs. "So that I didn't run into a sheep or get hit by a car," He doesn't seem too worried about the ghosts of Coe and Coe, arguing, "I have nothing to lose here. People are going to see my name and think who's he? That's good for me."

Anton, Machado star Day 1

HELSINKI, Aug 8: Abel Anton of Spain and Manuela Machado of Portugal brought the Iberian peninsula a golden bounty of medals on the opening day of the European Athletics Championships on Sunday, reports Reuter. Anton snatched a hard-won victory in the 10,000 metres, edging out Belgium's Vincent Rousseau who looked on in anguish as the Spaniard outran him just metres from the safety of the finishing line. He won a slow, tactical race in 28 minutes 06.03 seconds. Machado had earlier preserved Portugal's domination of the women's marathon when she won the first gold medal of the eight-day long event in two hours 29 minutes 54 seconds. Her illustrious compatriot Rosa Mota is the only other woman to have won the title, winning the three previous races in 1982, 1986 and 1990. The third gold of the day went to Viktoriya Paviysh, who became Ukraine's first-ever European champion, claiming the women's shot put title with a heave of 19.61 metres. But the biggest cheer of the day was reserved for Finland's Seppo Ratty, who unleashed a mighty throw of 84.76m in the qualifying round of the men's javelin, Finland's most-loved event. As well as the gold medal successes of Anton, Machado and Paviysh, the championships also produced the second positive doping case in successive days. British sprinter Solomon

Wariso, due to run in the 200 metres, was withdrawn from the championships by the British team following a positive dope test for the banned stimulant ephedrine at a meeting in Gateshead on July 1. On Saturday Norwegian sprinter Ahm Okeke was also withdrawn for testing positive for the same drug. There were also easy victories for 100 metres title favourites Linford Christie of Britain and Irina Privalova of

turned into a relatively pedestrian pold around 25 laps of the track. The first man to look a likely victor was Italian Francesco Pannetta, the reigning European 3,000m steeplechase champion who runs in a distinctive headscarf. But he eventually fell back through the pack before dropping out of the race altogether: four laps from home, leaving the spoils to be shared between a group of nine men who emerged by the bell.



Spain's Abel Anton celebrates after winning the men's 10,000m event of the European Championships in Helsinki on August 7. Belgium's Vincent Rousseau (background) came second. — AFP photo

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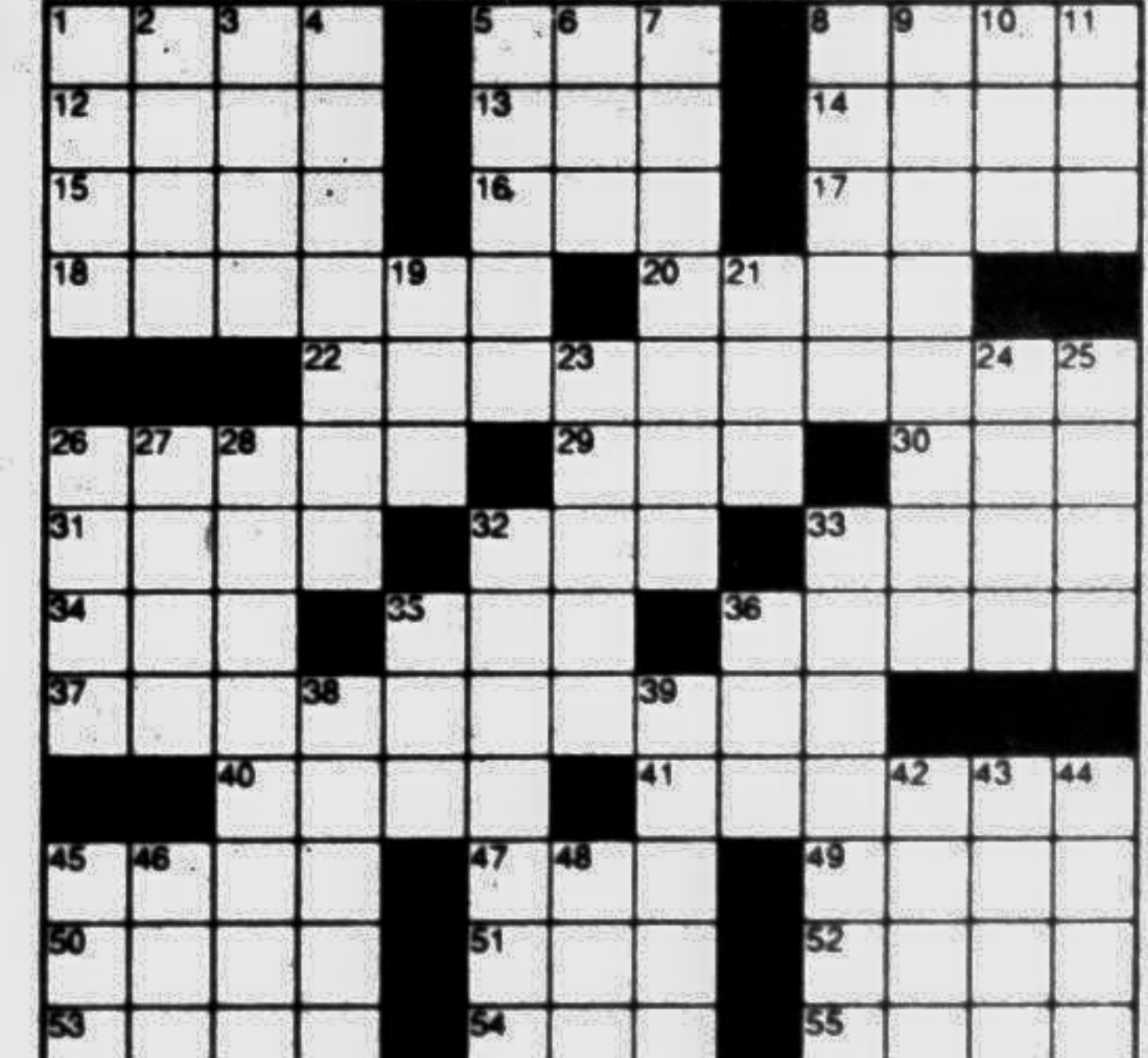
Curtain falls on Goodwill Games

ST PETERSBURG, Aug 8: A troupe of parachutists landing too early knocked over a line of youths marching with multi-coloured banners in a farcical end to the third Goodwill Games on Sunday, reports Reuter. The 25-strong troupe had been supposed to land on the pitch and greet the Russian and world selection sides preparing for an exhibition soccer match during the closing ceremony. But the parachutists descended as army brass bands played on. Although they managed to avoid the massed ranks of tuba-players and drummers they knocked several youths to the ground amidst raucous laughter from the crowd. The landing was a fitting end to a Games in which the swimming competition had to be postponed 24 hours because of dirty water and the short-track speed skating and figure skating events were delayed because the ice was too thin and too soft. "These 14 days will live in the memory forever," intoned St Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak before passing the Games' flame to New York state governor Mario Cuomo. New York will host the 1998 Games. On the pitch an experimental Russian side, featuring six of the team who flopped in the World Cup, struggled to beat an international eleven comprising a collection of hopefuls and has-beens. Russia, under new manager Leg Romantsev, took the lead with a fine low shot from Spartak Moscow's Omari Tetradze from the edge of the area in the 20th minute. Their opponents, who included 1982 World Cup veterans Zbigniew Boniek of Poland and German keeper Tony Schumacher, equalised through Bulgaria's Bontcho Guenchev early in the second half. St Petersburg-born Vladislav Radimov from CSKA Moscow celebrated his debut by lashing home the winner from close range with four minutes to go. Becker outguns Woodforde LOS ANGELES, Aug 8: Second-seeded Boris Becker overpowered unseeded Australian Mark Woodforde 6-2, 6-2 to win his 40th career singles title at the \$13,750 dollars Los Angeles Open on Sunday, reports Reuter. Becker's second title of the year lifted the confidence of the German approaching the start of the US Open later this month in New York. "Every match I played better this week. Today was very easy," said Becker, the 1989 US Open champion, but a fourth round loser a year ago. "I got up on him early in both sets. I kept hitting big serves and playing aggressively and there wasn't much he could do. Playing this way, I am very much looking forward to the US Open." For the 55-minute triumph, Becker earned 42,000 dollars while Woodforde collected 24,150 dollars at the 32-player, hard court tournament. The 11th-ranked Becker, controlled the 54rd-ranked Woodforde with his powerful serve, dropping just four points on serve in each set and tallying six aces and 12 service winners.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP STUSBTUG "PTUWZL," T CEVX CTUYEZL, YTU PZ CMUG MC XEV BMTU VXTLW Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ABLE CHIMNEY CLEANER'S INGENUITY WAS HEARTH-WARMING TO BEHOLD. Today's Cryptoquip clue: S equals G 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.