

Sport

Christie, Backley reign supreme



Britain's world and Olympic 100 metres champion Linford Christie raises his hand after winning the men's 100 metres final at the European Championships in Helsinki on August 8. Christie clocked 10.14 seconds. —AFP photo



HELSINKI, Aug 9: Linford Christie and a sensational Steve Backley hit doubles gold here on Monday to boost Britain's battered European championship challenge, reports AFP.

Both retained their titles after the squad had been hit with a drugs scandal on opening day, followed by an injury crisis after defending 200m champion John Regis was forced to bow out.

Backley's stunning performance to beat world and Olympic champion Jan Zelezny and home favourite and 1987 Olympic gold medalist Seppo Raty was a huge upset.

But team skipper Christie, despite three false starts before the 100m final, never had any doubts.

"I was always going to win — not taking anything away from the others, the only way I could have lost was if I had got injured," the Olympic and world champion said.

The false starts came because everybody was nervous — they know they have to get out if they want to beat me. I wasn't happy with the time, but I only came here to win.

"Who knows, I may come back in 1998."

Backley, however, the European and Commonwealth champion who has been plagued by injury since 1992, admitted he was the rank outsider — despite the support of his Finnish girlfriend in the crowd.

"Zelezny and Raty have thrown much longer than me this year so I can't say I was confident," he said after producing a winning throw of 85.20m.

"I have been throwing around 84m all season but no further. Even 85 is not that great although the conditions were not that great — we were never going to throw a world record."

The 25-year-old also admitted to a dreadful case of *deja vu* when Raty, who finished second in front of Czech Zelezny, lined up the final throw of the competition.

"It was just like when Whitbread lost the World Championships here to Tiina Lillak here in 1983 — I thought, here we go again," he said.

But this time, despite a fanatical 40,000 crowd, there was to be no repeat after former world record-holder Backley set the standard with his second throw.

He was even able to miss his fifth attempt after feeling a back niggles.

He added: "It was nice to win — firstly to retain the title and secondly because it was in Finland, where they appreciate the javelin so much."

A disconsolate Zelezny, who found his throws slipping right

and way short, said: "The problem was with my technique. I'm sorry, not because I have won a bronze, but because I was so bad."

He threw 82.58 to Raty's 82.90.

The 34-year-old Christie's nearest challengers were Norwegian Geor Moen (10.20) and Aleksandr Porokhomovskiy of Russia (10.31) — and his victory showed he is determined to lift the British contingent following the Regie's setback, which will also hit the team's relay hopes, and Solomon Wariso's positive drugs test on Sunday.

Christie was clearly not

If Privalova can win the 200m final on Thursday she will match Krabbe, whose career has since been wrecked after an IAAF ban for a positive drugs test and unsportsmanlike behaviour, effectively keeping her on the trackside for three years.

In other medal performances on Monday, the men's 20km walk went to Mikhail Schennikov, wiping out memories of the World Championship last year when he was disqualified for lifting on the finishing line.

Yevgeny Misyulya of Belarus came second, with world champion Valentin Massana of



STEVE BACKLEY... retains title

bothered by a hamstring injury dating back to mid-July which meant he could not run a warm-up race before the championships — although he did not produce his traditional burst in the last 40m and had to work hard to hold off the impressive Moen.

The other Golden moment of the day came when Russian sprint queen Irina Privalova completed the first leg of a 100-200m double.

The 25-year-old, determined to emulate Katrin Karbec's 100 and 200m feat in Split four years ago, ran 11.02 to beat Zhanna Tarnopolskaya of the Ukraine and Germany's Melanie Paschke.

She had already posted enough warning this season, with the first women's 100m European record for over a decade and fastest time in the 200m this year.

Spain, third.

Russian Anna Biryukova, the world record holder and world champion, won the women's ahead of Inessa Kravets of the Ukraine.

The second round of the 400m hurdles began with a victory for Swede Seven Nylander in 48.72. Nylander is looking to complete his medal collection after a bronze in the Europeans in 1986 followed by a silver in 1990.

Pedro Rodrigues of Portugal came second, while Britain's Gary Cadogan just qualified in fourth place.

The second heat went to favourite Stemphane Diagona of France, one of the event's nearly-men after fourth place in the last Olympics and World Championships, in 48.47.

Britain's Peter Crampton ran a personal best of 49.26 sec to qualify in third.

	G	S	B	Total
Russia	3	1	1	5
Great Britain	2	0	0	2
Ukraine	1	1	1	3
Spain	1	0	1	2
Portugal	1	0	0	1
Germany	0	1	2	3
Belarus	0	1	0	1
Belgium	0	1	0	1
Finland	0	1	0	1
Italy	0	1	0	1
Norway	0	1	0	1
Bulgaria	0	0	1	1
Czech Republic	0	0	1	1
Romania	0	0	1	1

Doping costs Kirmasov dear

HELSINKI, Aug 9: Russian hammer thrower Sergei Kirmasov faces a four-year ban from athletics after testing positive for the banned steroid associated with Ben Johnson, reports Reuter.

The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) said on Monday that Kirmasov, the 1992 Russian champion, was found to have stanozolol in his body when he threw 79.20 metres on May 23 to register the 10th best throw in the world this year.

The 24-year-old Kirmasov, who tested positive at an international meeting in the German town of Rehlingen, has been suspended and faces a four-year ban from the sport.

Stanozolol is the steroid found in the body of Canadian sprinter Johnson after he won the 100 metres at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

The IAAF confirmed the positive test at the European Championships although Kirmasov, the 1989 European junior gold medalist, was not selected for the event.

"The athlete has been suspended pending a hearing in Russia," an IAAF spokesman said. "We do not know the result of the hearing or whether it has taken place yet."

Despite the Russian's absence, the case brought the drugs issue into the spotlight again at the European Championships.

British sprinter Solomon Wariso and Norwegian Ahma Okeke have both been withdrawn at the last minute following positive tests for the banned stimulant ephedrine.

Indian C'wealth Games squad leaves for Canada

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: The first batch of the Indian contingent leaves here shortly after midnight tonight with hopes of winning more medals in the Commonwealth Games at Victoria than it did at Auckland four years ago, reports PTI.

The Games are to be held in the Canadian city from August 18 to 28.

Kumar Surendra Singh, chef-de-mission of the Indian contingent, who leads the first batch comprising shooters, told reporters here today that the main reason for optimism was the return of wrestling, in which India has traditionally been strong, after 12 years.

In the last Games, India won 32 medals including 13 golds (weightlifting 8 and shooting 5), 8 silver and 11 bronze.

Though judo, which fetched two bronzes for India at Auckland has been dropped, wrestling should yield a bigger harvest, he said.

Though the weightlifters may not do as well as they did last time when they won the championship, they should certainly make their presence felt.

So are the boxers who will be going without Raj Kumar Sangwan.

Among his own shooters, there is a setback due to the dropping out of Soma Datta who is busy with her studies in the United States. "We are trying to get her over there. We have not given up hope," Surendra Singh, who is also president of the National Rifle Association of India, said.

Among the rest of the shooters, he expected 18-year-old Jaspal Rana, winner of a gold in the World Championships at Milano recently, to do well.

Paes leads India's challenge

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: Former junior Wimbledon and US Open champion Leander Paes will spearhead India's fight to stay in the Davis Cup World Group in the September play-off against South Africa, reports AFP.

Paes, India's main hope following the retirement last year of Ramesh Krishnan, will be assisted by Zeeshan Ali, Gaurav Natekar and Asif Islam in the grass court tie in Jaipur.

The All India Tennis Association, which announced the team Monday night, made no change from the squad that suffered a 5-0 first round rout at the hands of the United States in New Delhi in March.

India's non-playing captain Jaideep Mukherjee said South Africa, who have one of the world's best grasscourt players in Wayne Ferreira, were the favourites to win the September 23-25 tie.

Mukherjee hopes to watch Ferreira and Marcus Ondruska in action at the US Open to size up the challenge.

Spanish duo advance

SAN MARINO, Aug 9: Spaniards and tournament favourites Javier Sanchez and Alberto Berasategui advanced Monday in first round play in the durs 300,000 San Marino tournament, reports AP.

Fourth-seeded Sanchez easily defeated Belgium's Xavier Dufresne, 6-3, 6-4.

First seeded Berasategui, who is ranked tenth in the world, lost the first set to Norway's Christian Raud, 3-6, then came back 6-3, 6-1.

Helsinki - a venue of champs

HELSINKI, Aug 9: While at first glance it would appear to be wholly inaccurate to say that modern athletics was born in the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki, on closer examination, the statement is undeniably true, reports Reuter.

Because exactly 11 years ago, the modern professional era of athletics, started with the inaugural World Championships in the stadium, a week in which modern-day heroes and heroines such as Carl Lewis, Sergei Bubka and Heike Drechsler all won their first major titles.

More than a decade later, that week in 1983 is still remembered as one of the greatest athletics competitions ever held.

Lewis, then 23, was the star of the show, winning gold medals in the 100 metres, long jump and relay, when he anchored the United States team to a world record of 37.86 seconds.

The following year in Los Angeles he emulated Jesse Owens haul of four Olympic golds in the 100, 200, long jump and relay.

While his 1984 performance recalled Owens's great achievement of the 1936 Olympics, his triple medal haul in Helsinki also evoked memories of an earlier era in the same stadium.

In 1952, Emil Zatopek of Czechoslovakia won three Olympic golds in the 5,000, 10,000 and marathon.

The day Zatopek won his 5,000 title was also the day his wife Dana won the women's javelin title, an event special to Finnish hearts.

Surprisingly, the first-ever javelin world record set in the stadium came 46 years after it was built.

On July 29, 1982, Finland's Tiina Lillak threw 72.40 metres for the world record — and the same woman was to win an everlasting place in Finnish sporting folklore a year later.

With one throw remaining in the World Championship javelin competition, Britain's Fatima Whitbread was in gold medal position after her first-round throw of 69.14 metres.

Then, with her final throw, Lillak threw 70.82m to send 50,000 home fans wild with delight as they celebrated a Finnish gold medal.

More than 30 years earlier the home crowd also cheered another Finnish legend in the same stadium — the incomparable Paavo Nurmi, who dominated distance running in the 1920s and 1930s.

national Amateur Athletic Federation for alleged financial irregularities, was 55 by the time the Helsinki Olympics were staged in 1952.

But that did not stop him making one final lap of the track — as the Olympic torch-holder in the opening ceremony.

The identity of the torch-holder had been kept secret until the huge electronic scoreboard flashed out the word "Nurmi", bringing lumps to thousands of throats before the 70,000 fans cheered as the small, balding man carried the Olympic torch around the stadium.

Nurmi's statue has been in the stadium grounds for the last 40 years, and on Saturday was joined by a new statue just a few metres away.

A bronze statue of Lasse Viren, who won the 5,000 and 10,000 titles in both 1972 and 1976, was unveiled by IAAF president Primo Nebiolo, a fitting tribute to, as Nebiolo called him, "One of the greatest runners in the history of the sport."

And while Viren stood smiling as the ceremony un-

folded, he might have cast his mind back to the last time the European Championships were staged here 23 years ago.

The stars of those games were Finland's Juha Vaatainen, who won the 5,000 and 10,000, Valeri Borzov, Karel Lismon, Janis Lusis and Renate Stecher.

Among the also-rans that week in 1971 was Viren, who finished seventh in the 5,000 and 17th in the 10,000.

Just over a year later Viren returned to run a world record 5,000 in 13:16.4, the last individual men's track record set in the stadium.

The venue has undergone a facelift for these championships and is now one of the best stadiums in Europe.

It is also unique in that it is the only one with a 72-metre high tower built into it.

Legend has it that the height of the tower corresponds to the distance of Finn Matti Järvinen's winning javelin throw at the 1932 Olympic Games.

It's story that may or may not be true, but adds to the romance surrounding a real venue of legends.



Russian Irina Privalova crosses the finish line to take the gold medal in the women's 100m at European Athletics Championships in Helsinki on August 8. Ukrainian Z. Tarnopolskaya (L) came in second. — AFP photo

Lendl cruises

MASON, Ohio, Aug 9: Unseeded Ivan Lendl beat 16th-seeded Jaime Yzaga of Peru 6-1, 6-3 on Monday in the first round of the 1.72 million dollar ATP Championship, reports Reuter.

The top eight seeds — Sergi Bruguera, Stefan Edberg, Michael Stich, Michael Chang, Andrei Medvedev, Todd Martin, Jim Courier and Boris Becker — all received first round byes, World No. 1 Pete Sampras, the reigning Wimbledon and US and Australian Open champion, withdrew on Friday with an injury to his left ankle.

Lendl won this hard court tournament in 1982 when he was ranked third in the world. Lendl went on to be ranked No. 1 in the world four times. Today he is ranked No. 29, but he showcased his past championship form in his 71-minute drubbing of the 24th-ranked Yzaga.

"I don't mean to sound arrogant, but if I'm healthy and hitting the ball well, I feel I'm the better player," said Lendl, at 34, the oldest player in the field. "He's had some good results this year. That's why he's ranked higher than I am."

Two other seeds — 14th-seeded Patrick Rafter of Australia and 15th-seeded Andrea Gaudenzi of Italy were ousted.

The 20th-ranked Rafter lost 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7-3) to 60th-ranked Martin Damm of the Czech Republic.

Stuer-Lauridsen sidelined

COPENHAGEN, Aug 9: Europe's top badminton player Thomas Stuer-Lauridsen will be out of action until late December after breaking his leg in the World Cup final in the Vietnam, his coach said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The Dane fell badly while trying to retrieve a difficult drop shot 10 minutes into the first game of the championship final on Sunday against Indonesia's Heryanto Arbi.

Unable to continue, Stuer-Lauridsen retired with Arbi leading 9-7.

Coach Morten Frost told reporters Stuer-Lauridsen had his leg put into plaster at a local hospital.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	U.N.C.L.E.	5 Maleficence	22 Murphy Brown's coworker
1 Spider-Man's logo	41 Kachina worshiper	6 Prefix for stick or stop	23 Kyle of football fame
4 It's further west than L.A.	42 Women-only affair	7 Switch positions	25 Target
8 Basilica area	46 Author	8 Triangular house	26 Columbus, e.g.
12 "I — Camera"	47 Piece of work	9 Tactic	27 Merriment
13 Bard's river	48 Farm femme	10 Passable	28 "The Immoralist" author
14 Stream	49 Suit to —	11 Basin accessory	30 Ballet bend
15 Form of bowling	50 Sweet-heart	16 Role modeled after	33 Tender-foot
17 Showman Billy	51 Big argument	19 Grand-scale	34 Actress Ward of "Sisters"
18 Shadow	1 Bankroll	20 Rock concert equipment	36 One of Peter's siblings
19 Clint Eastwood was one	2 Ostrich's cousin	4 Hasty view	37 Flushing field
20 Improve	3 Microscope	21 Catcall?	38 Legal wrong
22 Pull an all-nighter	4 Hasty		39 Mayberry lad
24 Unadorned			40 Cold-shoulder
25 Zero			42 Mischief
29 Luau gunk			43 Anti-pollution org.
30 Harbors			44 Tangos?
31 Caesar's 41			45 Archery bow wood

Solution time: 26 mins.

YEAR	MAP	AGAR
ODIE	AGO	WAIL
DINS	LES	ARMS
ATTUNE	TWIG	
MOBQUITOES		
BASED	URN	YEA
ALAS	PIE	ALLY
LON	LOT	PRESS
MUSKETEERS		
KNOT	POETIC	
FARE	EDS	NORA
OBIE	RIO	AGOG
GETS	YAM	LANE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13					14		
15		16						17		
		18						19		
20	21				22	23				
24				25				26	27	28
29									31	
32			33					34		
			35					36		
37	38	39						40		
41								42	43	
44								44	45	
46								47		48
49								50		51

CRYPTOQUIP

U A D Q W Z A O X B F W O K
E B D Y G F D Q O A Z
V Q O Q Y A U B Q F V G U R Q
G E O K D A G F D X A F D

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: **GANGLAND "BANKER," A FISH FANCIER, CAN BE FOND OF HIS LOAN SHARK.**

Today's Cryptoquip clue: **Z equals F**

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.