

Cloudy passage to Canada

Sports Reporter

Amidst speculations of all too familiar sharp practices over foreign trips, a 23-member Bangladeshi contingent leaves the capital for Canada today to take part in the 15th Commonwealth Games, scheduled to be held in Victoria from August 18 to 28.

Although Bangladesh's participation in the upcoming Games hardly symbolises anything beyond the expression of solidarity with the other Commonwealth countries, the seemingly endless maltradition of behind-the-scenes manipulation saw an unprecedented campaign of opportunism this time.

From the number of government orders (GO) issued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports with the Games it appears that no less than 50 persons, majority of whom have no essential links with the event, are all set to use the Games as their launching pads to leave the country either on the purpose of excursion, or to be more cynical, to seek better pastures as soldiers of fortune.

Clouds of nepotism loomed large over the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) as the son of the secretary general Bashir Ahmed, who has reportedly no link with the expedition, has lined up for the trip as an observer.

Journalists of no consequence and commitment to the sporting carnival have also confirmed their passage to Canada in this connection.

Maradona indicted

Buenos Aires, Aug 11: Fallen soccer superstar Diego Maradona was indicted Wednesday for shooting an air rifle at reporters last February, officials said, reports.

Maradona, suspended indefinitely from world soccer after failing a doping test at the World Cup, faces charges of causing bodily harm with pellets from his air rifle. The charges carry a maximum sentence of two years in prison.

Court officials in the town of Mercedes, 60 miles (100 km) from Buenos Aires, told Reuters that investigating judge Julio Campora signed the indictment Wednesday, wrapping up the first phase of proceedings against the former Argentina captain.

Maradona, 33, after being sacked by First Division club Newell's Old Boys last February, hours later took pot shots at reporters besieging his country home, injuring four.

Baresi changes his mind

Rome, Aug 11: Italian captain Franco Baresi, who said he was quitting international soccer after last month's World Cup final, has changed his mind, reports Reuters.

"I remain available for selection for the national team. It's up to the coach to decide whether he wants to pick me," the Gazzetta dello Sport on Thursday quoted Baresi as saying.

Baresi, 34, returned to the Italian team for the World Cup final with Brazil just three weeks after a knee operation.

Playing his 80th international, the Italian defender gave a masterly performance but then missed from the spot as Italy lost in a penalty shoot-out.

Baresi, who also captains European champions AC Milan, resumed training with his club on Wednesday and rejected suggestions that this would be his last season.

"I'll keep on playing as long as my fitness holds up... the knee which was operated on seems fine," he added.

Italy return to action on September 7 when they launch their qualifying campaign for the 1996 European Championships.

Ideal boost for Bavarians

STUTTGART, Aug 11: Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich beat Spanish champions Barcelona 3-0 in a warm-up tournament in Stuttgart to give themselves the ideal boost for the start of the season in nine days' time, reports Reuters.

Bayern, in only their second competitive match under new Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni, played a typically patient Italian-style match, saving their energy for sharp breaks.

Mehmet Scholl, new signing Jean-Pierre Papin and Marcel Witeczek all scored from breaks in the 13th, 65th and 86th minutes to give Munich a deserved win.

Barcelona's star combination of Romanian midfielder Gheorghe Hagi and Bulgarian striker Hristo Stoichkov outplayed Bayern's four-square defence several times only to be foiled by the post or the reflexes of new goalkeeper Oliver Kahn.



Action from yesterday's Star Premier Division football league match between title aspirants Abahani KC and Public Works Department (PWD) at the Dhaka Stadium. PWD held the DMFA Cup champions to a goalless draw. — Star photo

Abahani stumble again

Sports Reporter



It will be quite some time before Bulbul gets over a night of lady luck's betrayal as his side, the unfancied office team, Public Works Department (PWD), snatched a second point from heavyweights Abahani Krira Chakra in a goalless encounter of the Star Premier Division league at the Dhaka Stadium last evening.

Last year's runners-up Abahani, who dropped their first point of the season earlier to Wari Club, twice survived scare as the little known Bulbul's shot returned to play from the cross bar on two occasions, much to the relief of the large contingent of the sky blue supporters.

Bulbul's eventually abortive courtship with heroism was, however, against the tide of the events as Abahani held the whiphand almost throughout the match without ever finding the net legitimately.

The men from Dhanmondi did have the ball inside the net once when their Iraqi recruit Nazari Ali, the principal goalgetter for the Federation Cup champions with a haul of four goals, got his act right but the linesman quite rightly nullified the effort with a wave of the flag.

Abahani hardly have any reasons to grumble or point on accusing finger at that as a cause of their plight as PWD's

Halim too had the ball in the Abahani net from a corner but the referee ruled it out for Salam Khan's foul on the Abahani custodian Dhanu.

If anyone Abahani should really hold responsible for their tale of mortification over a period of ninety minutes, it should be the veteran striker Sheikh Aslam.

The dark hitman known for his explosiveness in the air had one of his header obstructed by the woodwork and went on to miss two absolute sitters.

After Aslam's serial effort in the 30th minute Bulbul almost froze Abahani three minutes later when he unleashed a thunderous left-footer from about 30 yards which beat Dhanu all ends up but returned off the woodwork.

Six minutes later, Aslam deposited a ball straight to the PWD custodian Shohan from close range.

Abahani had their share of second stroke seconds before the short whistle when Bulbul let fly another scorching left footer making light of the awesome presence of Monem Munna, normally regarded as the plinth of the Abahani defence but the woodwork again proved to be his bane.

Abahani's tale of misses stretched into the second half with Aslam at fault in the 61st minute.

Things improved a bit for Abahani once Gaus, one of the

three replacements on the night besides Tutul and Shamim replaced an off-colour Zulfikar Mintu. But the dark nippy left-winger, although assuring some bite into the attack, proved as goalblind as others and Abahani's second draw in this year's league became more and more an inexorable fate.

The draw leaves Abahani with six points from four matches while PWD raise their tally to three points also from four matches.

BOYS' FIRST

In day's other match promotees Bangladesh Boys earned their first point in style when they beat Agrani Bank by the odd goal in no less than nine.

The winners led the first half 2-1.

Badal Das and Bayezid slammed two each while Bapon completed the tally for the victors.

For Bankers Jamal, Mizan, Badal and Iqbal got one apiece. Boys have two points from four matches while Agrani Bank remain stuck to the solitary point from four matches.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Farashganj vs Muslim Instt (Mirpur Stadium 6:00)
East End vs Bima (Dhaka Stadium 4:30)
BU vs Muktiyoddha (Dhaka Stadium 6:30)

Touch of gold for O'Sullivan



HELSINKI, Finland, Aug 11: Sonia O'Sullivan, a former Villanova runner from Ireland, easily won the women's 3,000 meters and her first European title Wednesday, reports AP.

Sven Nylander, formerly of SMU (Dallas), lunged past a Frenchman at the tape of the men's 400 hurdles final.

Unfortunately for the Swede, it was only good for second as Ukraine's Oleg Tverdokhlebski snatched the gold in the European Championships Wednesday.

O'Sullivan, who last month set a world's best in the non-championship 2,000 metres and a European record in the 3,000, turned in a strong kick to win in 8 minutes, 31.84 seconds.

Yvonne Murray, the defending champion from Britain, was almost five seconds behind in 8:36.45. Gabriela Szabo of Romania set a European junior record of 8:40.48 for third.

"I think a lot of people were doubting me," O'Sullivan said. "I knew I was in good shape. If I was going to lose, it was going to be because I had made the mistake."

"I'm really, really happy. Coming home with a medal is one thing, but with the gold it is something else."

A year ago, the Chinese runners stopped O'Sullivan from winning a gold medal in the World Championships. In the 3,000, O'Sullivan finished fourth behind three Chinese and in the 1,500, another Chinese beat her for the gold.

On Sunday, the final day of the championships, O'Sullivan will try for the 1,500-metre title. Qualifying starts Friday.

Tverdokhlebski skinned the seventh hurdle, but went on to set a new national record of 48.06 in the 400 hurdles and win Ukraine's second gold in these championships.

"I was in big trouble at the end of the race," he said. "Luckily I managed it. Before the final I thought the winning time must be somewhat under 48.70. So you can imagine how happy I am with the new national record. I have a chance to run even faster."

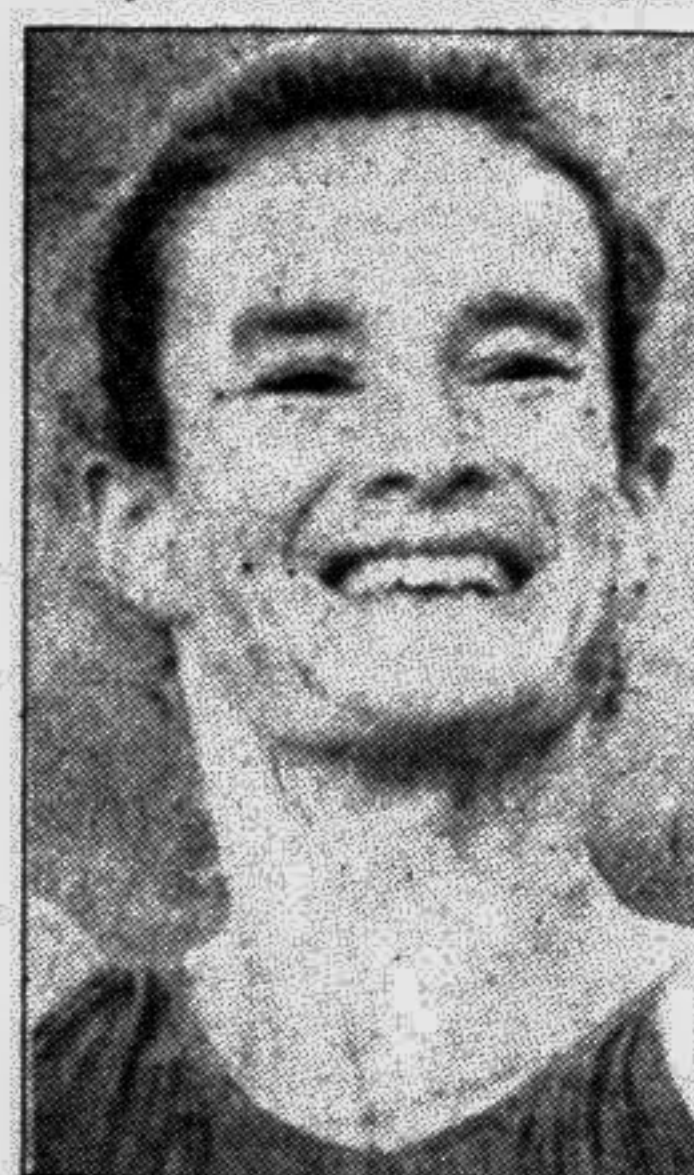
Nylander, who had a remarkable record of making all championship finals between 1982 and '87, also set a national record of 48.22 at age 32.

France's Stephane Diagana, whom Nylander beat in the

European Cup final in June at Birmingham, England, was third in 48.23.

"I had enough strength to catch Diagana, but not to win. It was a great run," Nylander said.

Nylander, who was trying to



SONIA O'SULLIVAN

became Sweden's first male European champion in 32 years, broke through with a fourth in the inaugural World Championships here in 1983.

He just can't win the gold in the big ones. He was fourth in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and the 1987 worlds in Rome. In previous Europeans, he has a bronze in 1986 and a silver in 1990.

Ivailo Mladenov of Bulgaria won his first major title, hitting 8.09 metres in his sixth and final try in the men's long jump.

Milan Gombala of the Czech Republic led most of the competition with an 8.04-metre effort in the second round that proved to be enough for the silver medal. Konstantinos Koukoudimos of Greece was third at 8.01 metres.

The long jumpers were bothered by a head wind from the start, but Mladenov said he was still confident going into the last round.

"It's my speciality to jump well on my last try," he said. Lyubov Gurina of Russia, who also competed here in the 1983 worlds, became the oldest female gold medalist ever in the European Championships by winning the women's 800 metres.

Gurina, 37, beat Natalya Dukhnova of Belarus in a photo-finish, both clocking 1:58.55. Third went to another Russian, Lyudmila Rogachoba, in 1:58.69.

"Maybe you are right, I'm like wine. The older the better," said Gurina, who had medaled in four of five previous European and World Championships but never gotten the gold.

Ikeke Wyludda went from last to first in one year, coming back from 11th and last in the worlds before her home fans in Stuttgart, Germany, to take the women's discus at 68.72 metres.



The players and officials of Dhaka Eleven which left the capital yesterday evening for the Indian city of Hyderabad to take part in the Moin-ud-Dowla Gold Cup cricket tournament. — Star photo

Cricketers off to India

Sports Reporter

A 17-member Bangladesh cricket team under the banner of Dhaka Eleven left the capital yesterday evening for Indian city of Hyderabad to take part in the Moin-ud-Dowla Gold Cup cricket tournament, scheduled to begin tomorrow.

Akram Khan, the burly right-hand batsman of Abahani Krira Chakra, will lead the team, consisting mainly of cricketers who have recently won the seven-nation youth cricket tournament in Malaysia.

Aminul Islam Bulbul, the ace Mohammedan allrounder, will act as Akram's deputy. The other two national stars in the India bound squad are national opener Jahangir Alam and Enamul Haq Moni.

The Dhaka Eleven will launch their campaign on the inaugural day of the week-long meet.

New faces in Windies squad

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Aug 11: Twenty-five-year-old leg-spinner Rajindra Dhanraj will make his first international tour this fall, named Wednesday as part of the West Indies' 16-man team that will visit India, reports AP.

In addition to Dhanraj, there are two other newcomers in the 16, batsman Sherwin Campbell and fast bowler Cameron Cuffy who get their chances due to the absence of Richardson, Haynes and Benjamin.

Campbell, 23, is a small, aggressive right-handed batsman who hit three centuries in five Red Stripe Cup matches last season. Cuffy, 24, is a 1.98-metre (6-foot-6) fast bowler from St. Vincent who staked his claims with 24 wickets in the Red Stripe Cup that also earned him a pro contract with English county, Surrey.

TEAM

Courtney Walsh (captain), Brian Lara (vice-captain), Jimmy Adams, Curtly Ambrose, Keith Arthurton, Kenneth Benjamin, Sherwin Campbell, Shivarine Chandrapaul, Cameron Cuffy, Andy Cummins, Rajindra Dhanraj, Roland Holder, Carl Hooper, Junior Murray, Phil Simmons, Stuart Williams, Manager: David Holford, Coach: Rohan Kanhai.

Asprilla doesn't want to become another Escobar

ROME, Aug 11: Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla said on Wednesday he had given up international soccer after a teammate was murdered following Colombia's humiliating early exit from the World Cup, reports Reuters.

Defender Andres Escobar was shot dead outside a restaurant, in his native Medellin after he scored an own goal in Colombia's 2-1 shock defeat to the United States in the first round of the World Cup.

"I don't think it is worth risking my life just to play on the national team," Asprilla said.

"After what happened to my friend, I will never return to the national squad. I have closed my account with Colombia," Asprilla, who plays for Italian side Parma, told the Corriere dello Sport newspaper.

"In Colombia, life is cheap. We tried our best to change the image of our country, where lawlessness is at unheard-of levels. Yet they treated Escobar like an animal — and they could have done it with any of us."

Colombian police, who arrested a man who confessed to shooting Escobar, have said the killing was not premeditated despite suspicions that it was related to death threats made against the team weeks earlier.

Drug traffickers were alleged to have beat heavily on Colombia and were rumoured to have sought revenge for the side's dismal performance.

Plucky De Silva ploughs in sands Anwar puts Pakistan on top



COLOMBO, Aug 11: Saeed Anwar put on a record equalling partnership to put Pakistan in a match-winning position in the first Test against Sri Lanka here Thursday, reports AFP.

Anwar hit an unbeaten 110, his second Test century, on the third day to help Pakistan pile up 238 for two — and an overall lead of 402 — at the close.

Sri Lanka's problems started when they lost their final five first innings wickets for 11 runs. Then Anwar's methodical 275-minute innings ensured that Sri Lanka will struggle when play resumes after Friday's rest day.

"Pakistan will probably set a target around 500 on wicket expected to turn in the final two days."

Anwar, who made his maiden century against New Zealand, was determined not to miss another golden chance after missing a hundred by just six runs in the first innings.

He made 95 in the first warm-up game against a Sri Lanka cricket board team. The left-hander has so far scored eight boundaries.

Anwar and Amir Sohail equalled the record first wicket stand for Pakistan against Sri Lanka of 128 — set by Rameez Raja and Shoaib Mohammad three years ago.

Sohail went for 65 to a catch at wide extra cover by



S ANWAR... 110 n.o

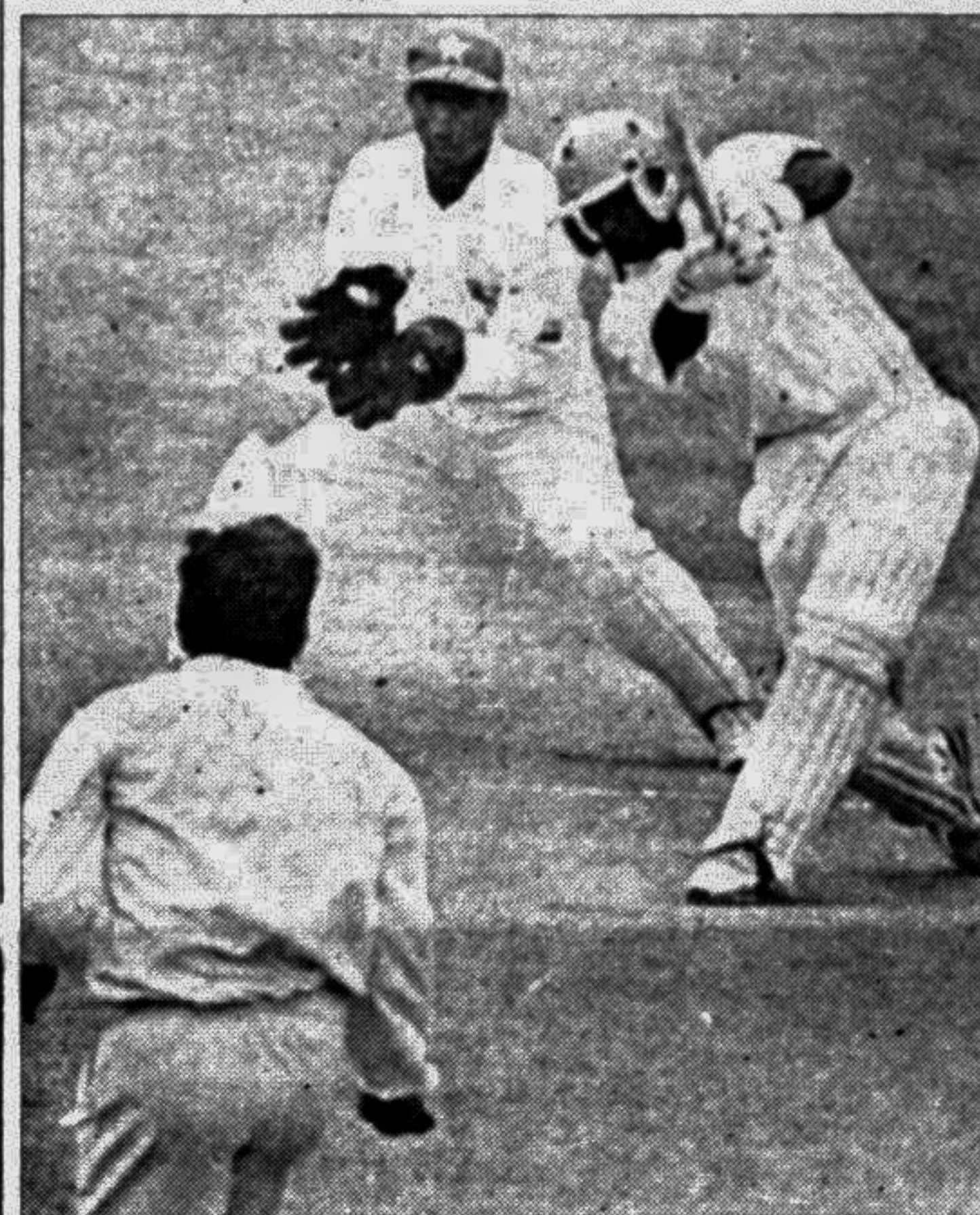
Sanath Jayasuriya off Kumar Dharmasena, the right-arm-off-cutter who had a Test best of six for 99 in the first innings.

But Sohail's wicket was the only success for Dharmasena in his 23 overs.

Asif Mujtaba added 74 runs for the second wicket with Anwar before the Pakistani vice-captain departed for 31.

Sri Lanka's slow bowling trio failed miserably to contain the powerful Pakistani top-order after their batsmen narrowly escaped being asked to follow-on.

Sri Lanka resuming from an overnight 152 for 4 and still needing 39 to avert the follow-on were bowled out for



Sri Lankan Aravinda de Silva brings up his hundred with a glorious six over the long-off boundary off a Mushtaq Ahmed delivery during the third day's play of the first Test against Pakistan in Colombo yesterday. De Silva scored 127 in his side's 226. — AFP photo

World Basketball Championships

US, Croatia in semifinals

TORONTO, Aug 11: The United States and Croatia scored crushing victories at the basketball World Championships on Wednesday as both teams clinched berths in the semifinals with 2-0 records in the round-robin quarter-finals, reports Reuters.

The US Dream Team II, led by Shaquille O'Neal and Reggie Miller, added some flash to a game that would otherwise have been more of a snooze than a dream as the Americans routed Puerto Rico 134-83.

Croatia defeated Canada 92-61 as both winners, each undefeated in five contests, led from start to finish.

O'Neal scored 29 points, 25 of them in the second half and 20 of them on dunks, while Miller bombed away for 28, outscoring the entire Puerto Rican team in the first half 26-25.

"Shooters shoot, dunkers dunk," said Miller of a game in which the United States had 19 dunks and 19 3-pointers.

"The big fella went about his business tonight," said teammate Larry Johnson of O'Neal, the giant young centre for the Orlando Magic whose dunks often came as the Puerto Ricans simply stood by and watched in awe.

O'Neal provided most of the second-half entertainment not only from his thunderous rim-hanging dunks, but also with a guard-like fullcourt solo break and slam, some head-shaking mock growls and grimaces at the crowd and even a hint of a show with feisty Orlando Vega, a guard who barely comes up to his chest.

"A little trash talk," said Vega. "They like that, I like that."

Even as he walked off the court after the game, O'Neal continued the show, holding a long scowl for the fans before breaking into a grin.

The US players took full advantage of the shorter 3-point line used in international play — 20 feet, 6.1 inches (6.25 metres) as opposed to the 23

feet, 9 inches (7.24 metres) they are used to in the NBA.

Miller, who stars for the Indiana Pacers, made 8-of-11 from 3-point range as well as his only 2-pointer, all in first half. He added two free throws in four minutes of action in the second half.

"I had the open shots and a shooter is supposed to take them," said Miller. "None of these games has been easy, although they might look that way. Our best games are ahead of us but we might not win them by a million points."

Kevin Johnson said Miller's marksmanship had impressed his US teammates in practice before the tournament. "We were all surprised by how well he shot the ball. Now he's showing the world."

The United States broke ahead 7-0 before Puerto Rico

pulled as close as 15-13, the NBA stars pulled away to 22-13, used an 11-0 run to make it 33-14, and two minutes later embarked on a 17-0 run to lead 52-19.

The half ended 62-25, with the United States shooting 66 per cent (10-of-15) from 2-point range for 20 points and actually slightly better from 3-point land, 68 per cent (13-for-16) for 39 points.

The second half was one long exhibition and the United States have now beaten their opponents by an average of 40 points in their five games.

Croatia, with an NBA connection of their own, are a strong candidate along with Russia to finish second behind the United States in the tournament. The Croatians did nothing to dispel that notion on Wednesday.

Dino Radja scored 25 points and Arjan Komazec added 22 to lead Croatia.

Radja, who plays for the Boston Celtics, shot a blazing 12-for-15 from the field, Toni Kukoc of the Chicago Bulls scored 15 and acted as playmaker, and 7-foot-1 (2.17 metres) Stojan Vrankovic, a former Celtic, patrolled the middle, pulling down a game-high 15 rebounds and blocking five shots.

Rick Fox of the Celtics scored 19 points and Kory Hailas added 17, all in the half. They were the only players in double figures for Canada.

The United States are 2-0 in their round-robin Group 1 quarter-finals after demolishing Australia in their first game. Puerto Rico, who were earlier soundly beaten by Russia are 0-2.

The Croatians, silver medalists at the 1992 Olympics, are now 2-0 in Group II after an easy victory on Monday over China, Canada, who lost by three points to Greece, are 0-2.

"Between Russia and Croatia that would be an excellent match," said US coach Don Nelson.

Navratilova made to sweat

MANHATTAN BEACH, California, Aug 11: Second seed and defending champion Martina Navratilova survived a third-set tie-break to advance to the third round of the 400,000 dollars Virginia Slims of Los Angeles on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Navratilova, who has said she will call it quits after this year, needed two hours and eight minutes to overcome Alexia Dechaume-Balleret of France 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7-4).

After a match like this, I'm glad that I'm retiring," joked the 37-year-old Navratilova.

In another second round matchup, Elena Likhovtseva of Kazakhstan outlasted 16th seed Pam Shriver 6-0, 3-6, 7-5 in one hour and 47 minutes to score the only upset of the day at the 32-player, hard court tournament.

Navratilova, now ranked fourth in the world, delighted the crowd as she opened the defence of her title with precision serve and volley,