



American swimmer Mark Henderson punches the air after clocking the fastest time in the men's 100m butterfly event at the National championships in Indianapolis on Aug. 15. Henderson's time was 53.60 seconds. — AFP photo

Soaring spirit is not all

Victoria 94. Aug 16: South Africa's historic return to the Commonwealth Games has failed to generate sell-out crowds in this genteel Canadian city, reports Reuter.

A large team from the republic has boosted the entry to a record 64 nations, but with around half the 360,000 tickets still unsold some competitors face the prospect of performing before sparse crowds.

Although organisers had to scale down plans for extravagant opening and closing ceremonies in Victoria's harbour, they hope the 160 million Canadian dollars (11 million US dollars) event will help revive a sense of purpose among former members of the British Empire.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth, who will officially open the games on Thursday, hailed South Africa's return after 36 years as a milestone. "This is a special year for our Commonwealth," she said during a pre-Games stopover in eastern Canada.

Games spokeswoman Amy Hart said: "The Commonwealth Games is a celebration of our common traditions. The focus is not to just see who can win the most medals. It's about coming together."

Namibia, which gained its independence in 1990, makes its Games debut while Hong Kong, due to revert from British to Chinese control in 1997, marks its last.

The survival of the Games themselves is also an achievement for the Commonwealth. They were said to be on the verge of extinction after African countries boycotted them in Edinburgh in 1986 in protest at British tolerance of South Africa's apartheid regime.

While organisers deny any lack of public interest, the Games have languished in the shadow of sports events like the Olympics. Black ticket sales are but one sign that many citizens increasingly view the Commonwealth as irrelevant.

But for the 3,500 athletes competing here during the 11-day event, the spirit of the Games remains unmatched.

"It's much friendlier than the Olympics. The spirit of what Games should be is much more alive," said former athletics great Kip Keino, now head of the Kenyan team.

Along with the Queen, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien will preside at opening festivities featuring 4,000 performers at the University of Victoria's Centennial Stadium.

Victoria, perched on Canada's pacific coast about 40 miles (70 km) west of Vancouver, provides a suitably British backdrop for the competition.

Wrong tune at wrong time

VICTORIA, Aug 16: Zimbabwe's 43-strong team stood in stunned silence when Commonwealth Games organisers played the wrong national anthem at the country's flag-raising ceremony on Monday, reports Reuter.

When embarrassed officials realised their mistake, they lowered the flag and then raised it again over the Athletics Village as Zimbabwe's correct anthem was played.

"We're very sorry. Apparently the tapes got switched," said Games official Doug Clement.

Nigeria, Western Samoa, Zambia and Barbados also had their flags raised at the same ceremony.

Aussie natants under pressure

VICTORIA, Aug 16: Australian swimmers are under pressure from within their own team as well as their rivals before Commonwealth Games competition starts on Friday, reports Reuter.

As overwhelming favourites in the pool, the Australians are being targeted by the other swimming nations as the squad to beat.

But they also have to watch their backs for their own teammates could deprive them of a coveted place in the lineup for the World Championships in Rome next month.

"Whoever gets the bronze in the 1,500 is likely to feel really upset," said world record holder Kieren Perkins on Monday.

Three top Australians are entered for the 1,500 metres freestyle, but only two will qualify for Italy.

Olympic champion Perkins said he remained good friends with Olympic silver medalist Glen Houseman and the world short course champion Dan Kowalski out of the water.

But once in the pool the rivalry became intense.

"This is probably going to be one of the most high pressure scenarios for us," said Perkins, beaten by Kowalski at the Australian open Championships last March.

But despite the lure of the World Championships, Perkins still considers the Commonwealth Games the more important competition.

"It's one of Australia's favourite meets and what I've always strived for," he said.

Chief coach Don Talbot said expectations were always high for Australian swimming. "We get a lot of pressure — the public always thinks we should be better," he said.

The Australian team have tagged the current tour, taking swimmers directly from Victoria to Rome, as "the big one."

"We'll be really trying for both competitions," Talbot said. "I believe with experience of the first meet we can motivate ourselves better for the second," he said.

Vana should've known better

SINGAPORE, Aug 16: Czech football star Michael Vana has been sacked from the Singapore national team days after being charged with taking bribes to fix matches, a Football Association of Singapore official said Tuesday, reports AFP.

The official confirmed local press reports that Vana, 31, had been sacked, but declined to give the reason.

Vana, one of the three foreign players representing Singapore in the annual semi-professional Malaysia Cup tournament, was charged in a magistrate's court Saturday with six counts of accepting bribes from a bookmaker to fix matches, totalling some 375,000 Singapore dollars (251,000 US).

He has been released on bail of 500,000 Singapore dollars and had his passport confiscated by the court.

Also charged with taking bribes relating to match-fixing was a Singapore referee, Thiru Rajamanickam.

Rajamanickam, 43, a referee registered with the world football body FIFA, faced two charges of taking bribes to influence a referee officiating the Singapore-Kelantan match last month, to favour Singapore.

They were charged separately and their cases have been fixed for further mention on September 2.

The Malaysia Cup tournament is a domestic inter-state event but Singapore and Brunei are the only two foreign teams invited to take part.

All teams are allowed to engage a limited number of foreign professionals. Vana has played for Singapore in the last three years.

'Last outpost of the Empire' welcomes the Commonwealth

By Cleve Dheensaw

The last Commonwealth Games in Vancouver cost C\$500,000 to stage; this time around the bill is C\$160 million. The city, however, is banking not on big bucks to make this a memorable event but on its friendliness and Garden City ambience. Nevertheless, reports Gemini News Service, the organisers have even provided for "protest zones."



Many of the more than three million tourists who visit this city each year are American, but Victoria is Commonwealth all the way. From the imposing statue in the harbour of Queen Victoria — who lends her name to the city — to double-decker buses and afternoon teas, this "last outpost of the Empire," as it was once called, has always played on its Little Bit of Old England ambience.

And now, on the 40th anniversary of the previous staging of the event in Canada's most western province, Victoria is ready to host the 15th Commonwealth Games.

There has been a fair bit of inflation over the past four decades. The 1954 Vancouver British Empire Games, as the event was then known, cost less than C\$500,000 to stage. After eight years preparation, the 1994 Victoria Games has a pricetag of C\$160 million.

There were times when it looked as though the smallest city to ever host the event was going to be unable to pull it all together. It has been so overwhelming for a town of 300,000 people that is 1992 the Australian city of Adelaide offered to take the Games over if Victoria was not going to be ready in time.

But under the stern guidance of Games president George Heller, a no-nonsense former department store executive, the city sorted out its problems, and got on with the job.

"The Commonwealth is a family and the town is ready to welcome that family," says Games spokeswoman Amy Hart. "The facilities are ready — it's all fine tuning now, all icing on the cake. The banners, are flying and the flowers blooming. I believe we are going to host the best Games ever."

But things are never as rosy as public relations flacks make out. With the television audience for the Games estimated at up to 300 million, it is not surprising that some people want to make political points.

Vancouver Island is at the centre of a fierce debate over logging practices. The island's militant environmental movement has let it be known it will be at the Games in full force.

So Games officials have taken the unusual step of providing "protest zones" at each venue. As long as protesters stay to their zones and do not harass spectators or visitors, a co-existence can be worked out; otherwise it will become a police matter, they warn.

Things have already heated up with anti-logging protesters establishing a squalid-looking squatter camp at a key entrance point into Victoria. A pitched duel has ensued as regional officials try to evict the squatters from the park and take down their signs before the Games.

On top of all this, a Canadian Union of Public Employees strike affected work at some Games sites. Nevertheless, the facilities are ready.

Victorians know they are not going to impress anybody

An eye-catching new C\$22.5 million pool has been built in suburban Victoria and designed in a native aboriginal motif complete with totem poles. Centennial Stadium in the University of Victoria has had a C\$12 million face-lift and now seats 34,500. The new C\$2.4 million Juan de Fuca Velodrome and Lawn Bowls Complex will see cyclists and bowlers competing alongside each other.

The Athletes Village next to Centennial Stadium will be home to 3,500 athletes, managers and coaches from 67

with their venues, unlike the 1998 Games host city — Kuala Lumpur — which is building massive, Olympian edifices as befits a society that sees itself as a rising Asian giant.

Victorians feel their trump is not in the venues but in their city. They constantly point to Christchurch, the previous smallest city to host the Games, as proof that bigger does not necessarily mean better. Victorians hope their city's small-town flavour and charm win people over.

Victoria is already known as the City of Gardens, and now

Where they will perform



Commonwealth nations and dependencies.

A total of 2,000 new housing units have been constructed for the Games with the remaining athletes to be housed in the existing campus dorms. After the Games the Athletes Village will be used as student apartments.

The estimated 2,500 reporters and photographers will be housed at two sites. Food is a tricky business at Games and the varied tastes within the Commonwealth will be catered to with specially prepared meals for different groups.

The dining room will be open 24 hours so athletes can chow down whenever the spirit moves them and it moves them often — perhaps not the petite female gymnasts but certainly the burly hammer and discus throwers.

The New Zealand city put on a laid-back event that is still talked about for its easy-going grace and pace.

Victorians know they are not going to impress anybody

locals have planted thousands more flowers along the Pat Bay Highway, the main thoroughfare into town from the airport or ferry terminal.

Brightly-coloured Games banners are flying everywhere and key buildings have been decorated with Games bunting. A huge nightly Games concert-festival is expected to attract crowds of up to 40,000 to the harbour after the sporting events.

Featuring top-line Canadian performers and cultural groups from around the Commonwealth — including Australia's top aboriginal dance troupe, the State Dance Company of Malaysia and Jamaican reggae bands — the festival hopes to give the Games a real party and community atmosphere.

About the Author: CLEVE DHEENSAW is a sportswriter for the Victoria Times-Colonist newspaper and author of three sports books, including his latest — *The Commonwealth Games: The First Sixty Years*.

Brown, relaxed but ready

VICTORIA, Aug 16: Australian world record holder Rebecca Brown looks quite at home on Vancouver Island, where life is gentle, even lazy and stress is apparently unknown, reports Reuter.

The 17-year-old swimmer, seeking a Commonwealth title at 100 and 200 metres breaststroke, is so relaxed she looks half asleep as she discusses her chances of a medal.

"My coach's advice is to try to relax and enjoy yourself," she said on Monday. When she is not training Brown says she is content to spend her time lying around and listening to music.

Out of the water it is hard to imagine the young Queenslander exploding with speed as she did in March when she broke the 200 metres world record at the Australian Open Championships with two minutes 24.76 seconds.

And she will be trying to improve on that performance when the event is held on Saturday.

"My main aim is to win, but I'm going to try to do my best time. I always do," she said.

Brown will find some stiff competition at the newly-built Saanich Commonwealth pool north of the city, from her own teammate Samantha Riley, an Olympic bronze medalist, and Canada's Gylaine Cloutier.

But she remains unperturbed at the prospect. "Everyone's going to be going well. I've got to just not worry about them," she said.

Brown was encouraged into the swimming pool as a child because her mother felt the exercise would help her asthma. She loved it and began competing seriously at the age of 10.

Fame came suddenly and unexpectedly at 16, but Brown took it all in her stride. "I just try to handle it and be myself," she said before posing like an old hand for photographs.

Brown admits that on the day before a competition she does get a little nervous. On race days after the heats she tries to sleep in the afternoon as preparation for the finals. On other days she simply hangs around in the Athletes Village.

It is a restricted and sheltered life and Brown misses out on the parties, discos and pastimes of other 17-year-olds.

It's curtains for Colak

ANKARA, Turkey, Aug 16: The Macedonian High Court Tuesday upheld the extradition of Turkish soccer star Tanju Colak, Turkey's Anatolia news agency reported, reports AP.

Colak, the leading scorer in European soccer in the 1987-88 season, fled Turkey shortly before a warrant was issued for his arrest last month. He was eventually arrested Aug. 9 in Macedonia.

Colak faces 22 months in prison and a fine of 772 million lire (dtrs 24,500) for knowingly buying a smuggled car. An appeals court upheld his conviction last month.

Anatolia said the extradition is expected to take place on Friday after completion of the legal procedures.

The conviction will effectively end Colak's soccer career, because Turkish sports regulations forbid anyone sentenced for certain crimes, including smuggling, from playing professionally again.

Colak starred for the Istanbul team Galatasaray in the late 1980s and for Fenerbahce in the early 1990s.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Hasty escape
4 Hair-cream dosage
7 Pita, e.g.
12 "I — line-man..."
13 Overenthusiastic
14 Red cent?
15 Glutton
16 Elizabeth C. Sea-man's nom de plume
18 Past
19 Truth held to be self-evident
20 Move rapidly
22 Conger, for one
23 Ex-frosh
27 Wife of Saturn
29 Free
31 Colorless
34 Emanations
35 The Continent
37 Sapporo sash
38 Tolerate
39 Weir
41 Nap
45 Ran the stopwatch
47 Indispensable
48 "Iron John" author
52 One of Rushmore's
53 Teddy Roosevelt's daughter
54 Grant's foe
55 Country club employee
56 Forget —
57 Airport abbr.
58 Actor Bannen DOWN
1 Bolivia's capital
21 Drive
23 Calamary

DOWN

2 Chihuahua chum
3 Backus portrayal
4 Comedian
5 Tops
6 Prove otherwise
7 Fedora feature
8 Wish
9 Recede
10 Every last
11 TV actress Susan
17 "Damn Yankees" vamp
21 Drive
23 Calamary

24 " — Town"
25 Lindstrom or Zadora
26 Alts.
28 Vitality
30 Component of urban traffic
31 Symbol of intrigue
32 Shade
33 George's brother
36 Rewrite
37 Brunch entree
40 Saunter
42 Giraffe's kin
43 Football ref, jocularly
44 Keep an — (watch)
45 Waste allowance
46 Turned red?
48 Dam buster of song
49 Barcelona bravo
50 Crib
51 "The Name of the Rose" author

Solution time: 25 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

NUQ JAQDP DKP RDXQ
JDXQA ALFQF NY NUQ
YRRDFLYK

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: PUBLICATION FOR BODYBUILDERS AND FITNESS ENTHUSIASTS: THE BENCH PRESS.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: R 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.



Totem poles have been erected as part of the opening ceremony of the 15th Commonwealth Games due to begin in the Canadian city of Victoria from August 18. — AFP photo