



A ringside view of the opening ceremonies of the 15th Commonwealth Games in the British Columbian city of Victoria on Thursday. A 33,500-strong crowd thronged at the University of Victoria Stadium to watch the ceremonials. —AFP photo

XV Commonwealth Games begin

VICTORIA, British Columbia, Aug 19: Pigeons flew as young girls danced amid multi-coloured banners. Mounties rode their horses to a musical accompaniment. Queen Elizabeth II delivered her message in French and English.

And the crowd heartily cheered the return of South Africa.

So began the XV Commonwealth Games Thursday as 3,350 athletes from a record 64 nations began 10 days of competition in this charming provincial capital on the southern tip of British Columbia's Vancouver Island, reports AP.

The jets of Canada's Snowbirds precision flying team roared in tight formation over the makeshift stadium at the University of Victoria, where some 33,500 people gathered to watch the pageantry surrounding the queen's opening of the Games. An estimated 500 million watched on television worldwide.

Competition began Friday in eight sports, including swimming. Some of the top swimmers in the world are entered.

The opening day of competition also includes badminton, boxing, gymnastics, lawn bowls, wrestling and shooting. Track and field starts Monday and weightlifting begins Tuesday.

The two and a half opening ceremony was produced by Jacques Lemay, who also put together the opening extravaganza for the Calgary Winter Olympics in 1988. Thursday's themes were tied to the native heritage of Vancouver, Island, and to the different cultures of the people of Canada.

The 3,800 performers in the opening ceremony ranged in age from 6 weeks to 95 years. The baby was recruited to the choir while the oldest was an elder of the Coast Salish Nation, whose members officially welcomed the visitors from the former British Empire to their native land.

A portion of the crowd broke out in cheers as the blue-clad South Africans entered the stadium. When the announcer said, "Ladies and gentlemen, returning to the Commonwealth of Nations is South Africa," the rest of the crowd stood and cheered.

South Africa last appeared in the Games in 1958. The country was booted from the Commonwealth in 1961 for its racist policies but returned when majority blacks were granted equal status.

The beaming athletes and officials waved tiny flags from their newly integrated land.

The athletes waved as they walked past the queen. Only the delegation from Togo bowed to her.

Great Britain is represented by four delegations — from England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, whose men wore blue and red plaid kilts as they marched around the track.

Canadian biathlete Myriam Bedard, a two-time gold medal winner in the Winter Olympics at Lillehammer, Norway, brought the Queen's Baton into the stadium on roller blades, using ski poles to propel herself around the

track.

The baton, designed by three artists from the three native "First Nations" of Vancouver Island, left Buckingham Palace in London on March 14 and was taken to all regions of the Commonwealth.

After the baton was presented to the queen, she read the message — it contained declaring the Games officially open.

"We know that we can expect 10 days of fine sporting achievement at the venues, the traditional comradeship of the Games' village and the excitement and happiness that comes from the meeting of athletes from all parts of the Commonwealth," the queen said.

"I greatly look forward to my stay here and wish you all a successful and joyful Games."

The queen and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, entered the stadium in a 1939 Buick convertible. They joined their son, Prince Edward, the president of the Commonwealth federation; Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and other dignitaries to watch the ceremony.

Sir Roger Bannister, who ran the first sub-4-minute mile in 1954, and his great rival, John Landy of Australia, raised the Commonwealth flag.

The loudest cheers were for the host team, whose members tossed frisbees into the crowd.

New Zealand, which hosted the Commonwealth Games four years ago, led the parade.

The Australian delegation was led by a group of disabled athletes, a response to comments by the head of the team that such athletes were an "embarrassment" to the Games. Arthur Tunstall later apologized and said his remarks were taken out of context.

Hong Kong made its final appearance in the Games, its delegation waving politely. Hong Kong is to be ceded to China in 1997.

However, the ceremonies, touted as a showcase of Canada's cultural diversity, were clouded by cross-cultural misunderstanding.

Songhees national chief Norman George boycotted the evening events saying the Songhees band was snubbed by organizers.

"I can't participate in opening ceremonies because my people have been left out in the cold," he said.

"We're surprised at his remarks," said Games spokeswoman Amy Hart.

George said the Songhees nation was boycotting because of organizers' failure to recognize them as the host band.

Instead they were lumped together with other native bands and nations, even though the Games in Victoria and Envisons are taking place on Songhees territory.

"If protocol was followed, we would be the host nation," he said.

Organisers had originally hoped to stage the opening ceremony at the picturesque inner harbour, but Hart said that proved to be impractical.

"It would have been a spectacular element. It was a major element in the bid."

"But we found the security problems were enormous, moving the queen, VIPs and others in barges in the dark."

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Stich sweeps Vacek aside

NEW HAVEN, Conn., Aug 19: Top seeded Michael Stich beat 15th-seeded Daniel Vacek 6-2, 6-2 in the Volvo International on Thursday in a match interrupted by an emergency alarm accidentally set off by another player's young son, reports AP.

Stich, who earlier beat Marcelo Rios in a match resumed because of a rain delay Wednesday, was leading Vacek 6-2, 2-1 in the third-round match when the alarm sounded at stadium court.

The players and fans evacuated the 15,000-seat stadium after an automated voice came over loudspeakers saying an emergency device had been discovered, and instructing anyone inside to calmly leave.

Moments after the building was emptied, tournament officials broadcast over the loudspeaker system on the grounds of the Connecticut Tennis Center that it was a false alarm and safe to return to watch the match.

Stich finished off Vacek after a 5 1/2 minute delay as fans were filling back into

their seats.

Stich, who earlier Thursday beat Rios 6-3, 7-5 in a second-round match suspended Wednesday night when it started to rain, was one of five players advancing to the quarterfinals.

NO. 11 Mali'Val Washington upset NO. 5 Petr Korda 6-3, 6-3 in a match between the last two runner-ups of the tournament Washington in 1992 and Korda last year.

In other early third-round matches, NO. 6 Yevgeny Kafelnikov beat qualifier Wayne Black 6-4, 4-6, 6-4; NO. 8 Patrick Rafter defeated Vincent Spadea 7-6 (7-2), 6-4; and NO. 7 Marc Rosset overcame NO. 10 Ivan Lendl 7-6 (8-6), 6-4, 6-4.

In night matches, third-seeded Boris Becker defeated NO. 13 Andrei Chesnokov, and NO. 2 Andrei Medvedev, the defending Volvo champion, won the second of his back-to-back matches to advance to the quarterfinals.

Medvedev, who won against Grant Stafford early Thursday in a second-round match postponed the day before because of the weather, beat NO. 16 Stefano

Pescosolido 6-2, 7-6 (7-3).

Stich said he tried to get off the court as fast as he could after hearing the alarm, which was accidentally set off in the players' lounge by the 2-year-old son of Cyril Suk, who's competing in the doubles competition.

All I thought to do is get off the court as quickly as possible and get somewhere safe," he said.

Stich said playing back-to-back matches didn't hurt his game, and that he was some what surprised by how quickly he was able to finish off Vacek.

"It was easier than I expected it to be," Stich said. The false alarm was the latest calamity at the Volvo International, which seems to have some type of problem each year since moving to New Haven in 1990.

On Tuesday night, Andre Agassi made a mockery of the music being played between changovers, an idea being tested by the ATP Tour.

In past years, the tournament has suffered from numerous rain delays, problems with the court surface, and player complaints about the lights.



Russia's Irina Privalova (C) grimaces as she crosses the finishing line to win the women's 200 metres event at the Zurich Athletics Grand Prix meeting on Aug 17. American Gwen Torrance (L) came second while Jamaican Merlene Ottey (R) finished third. — AFP photo

Regal salve

VICTORIA, Aug 19: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II took pains to praise disabled athletes Thursday as a controversy raged over their participation in the Commonwealth Games, reports Reuter.

"Canada has been a leader in ensuring... that disabled people have the facilities and (sports) events worthy of their courage and ability," she said at a state dinner after opening the Games, which run through August 28.

Top Australian sports official Arthur Tunstall sparked a furor Wednesday when he said he believed disabled athletes were an embarrassment and should have their own competition separate from the Games.

Canadian organisers of the multi-sports event have stressed strides toward integrating disabled athletes in the competition. About 55 are taking part in disabled events.

The Queen lauded Canadian wheelchair athlete Rick Hansen, who lobbied to have events for disabled athletes in the Games.

Jager jives on

INDIANAPOLIS, Aug 19: The old man of swimming, Tom Jager, won the 50-metre freestyle on Thursday at the US Swimming Championship, reports Reuter.

Jager, 29, the three-time Olympian and world record holder in the event with a time of 21.81, won the event in 22.33 in the world's second fastest time this year.

It was Jager's ninth career victory in the event in which he holds four of the world's top-10 times.

"I am staying in this sport purely to compete in the Olympics," Jager said. "It would be nice to be a part of history. No male swimmer has ever been to four Olympics. I'd like to be the first. Right now, I'm way ahead of my schedule. To have the second fastest time in the world at this point is pretty good, it may even make a few swimmers shake."

Janet Evans, 22, Olympic gold medalist and world record holder in the 800-metre freestyle, won the event in 8.30.82. It was her 41st national title and her 11th in the event. It was her second win of the meet. Evans also won the 400-metre freestyle earlier in the week.

Turkey-born Ugur Taner, 20, now a US citizen, won the 200-metre butterfly in 1.59.04. Taner competed for the Turkish national team, at the 1991 European Junior Championships and 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Spain, but has since changed his citizenship and earned a bronze medal in last summer's Pan Pacific Championships in the 200-metre freestyle.

Florida school girl Allison Wagner, 17, won the 200-metre individual medley in 2.13.88, second fastest time in the world. It was Wagner's third win of the meet. Wagner also won the 400-metre individual medley and 200-metre breaststroke. Jeff Ross, 24, won the 100-metre backstroke in 54.79.

A maximum of 26 men and 26 women will be selected for the US World Championship team. First through fourth-place finishers in the 100- and 200-metre freestyles and all event winners qualify.

Sharkey no more

BEVERLY, Mass. Aug 19: Jack Sharkey, former heavyweight boxing champion of the world and the oldest man to hold that title, died Wednesday at the age of 91, reports AP.

Sharkey was a member of the most experienced member of the Welsh team, boxes the winner of western Samoa's Emelio Leti and Nigeria's Duncan Dokwari for at least the bronze medal.

McCormack's main motivation comes from missing a medal in the last two Games. He lost in the quarterfinal in the 1986 Games in Edinburgh, to New Zealand's Michael Kenny, and at the same stage against Scotland's Dougie Young four years later in Auckland.

McCormack and Williams have sparred together as part of the Great Britain squad and are great friends. "But friendship did not help Danny Watts," Irwin added. Watts was knocked out by a left hook from Williams in the final of the multinational event.

Canadian team manager Anderson was certain the Williams-Hinton fight would be totally different than the previous encounter. "There's no question Hinton is in better condition this time. He has worked hard on his fitness to add to his punching strength with both hands," Anderson said.

Natants first into action

VICTORIA, Aug 19: With the biggest track stars still competing in Europe, some of the world's top swimmers will start the action at the XV Commonwealth Games, officially opened Thursday by Queen Elizabeth II, reports AP.

Hayley Lewis, who won five golds for Australia four years ago at Auckland, New Zealand, aims to add two more to her collection Friday in the 400-metre individual medley and the 800 freestyle relay.

Her countryman, Phil Rogers, the short course world record-holder, will go against 200 champion John Cleveland of Canada and favoured Nick Gillingham of England in the 100 breaststroke.

Another Australian, Kieren Perkins, who holds the world record at 800 and 1,500 meters, goes in the 200 freestyle.

Some 3,300 competitors from a record 64 nations are at the 10-day Games, which features 10 sports.

The South Africans have returned to the Games for the first time since 1958. They

were kicked out in 1961 because of world-wide opposition to their apartheid policy but have been welcomed back since that system was abandoned.

They now have a new flag and, at Thursday's opening ceremonies, Hezekiel Sepeing, a black 800-meter runner, was the first to carry it at a major multi-sports event. The South Africans got a long standing ovation from the 33,000 spectators in Centennial Stadium.

Elana Meyer, a 10,000-meter runner who won a silver medal at the 1992 Olympics, is South Africa's big hope on the track, while a contender in the boxing ring is light fly-weight Hawk Makepula, one of seven black competitors on the team.

Although swimming events start Friday with finals of the women's 100-metre freestyle, men's 100 breaststroke, women's 400 individual medley and women's 800-freestyle relay, the first medals will go to cyclists in the men's team time trial.

Badminton, boxing, gymnastics, lawn bowls, wrestling and

shooting also start Friday, while track does not begin until Monday and the weightlifting opens Tuesday.

England has a powerful track team led by world and Olympic champions Linford Christie and Sally Gunnell, who still are competing at Europe meets.

Christie's main rivals in the 100 meters will be Namibia's Frankie Fredericks, double Olympic silver medalist and 200-metre titlist at the 1993 World Championships, and Nigeria's Olapade, Adeniken, who finished third to Christie at Zurich on Wednesday.

Gunnell, who also is world record-holder, should have no trouble defending her 400-meter hurdles title. Her main rivals don't compete for Commonwealth nations.

Colin Jackson, world champion and record-holder in the 110-meter hurdles, competes for Wales. His main rival will England's Tony Jarrett, runner-up to the Welshman at the World Championships.

In the absence of Jamaican star Merlene Ottey, the women's sprint races appear wide open.



Queen Elizabeth II(L) receives the Queen's baton from Olympic gold medalist Miriam Bedard of Canada at the opening ceremonies of the 15th Commonwealth Games in Victoria, British Columbia on August 18. —AFP photo

Williams in for a tough ride

VICTORIA, Aug 19: Danny Williams faces a tough task if he is to live up to his billing as the Commonwealth super heavyweight favourite, after the draw was made here on Thursday, reports AP.

England's Williams, 21, will box Canada's Shana Hinton, whom the Londoner beat in the multi-national event in Liverpool, England, earlier this year, with experienced Welshman Kevin McCormack his likely semifinal opponent.

But both England national coach Ian Irwin and Canadian team manager John Anderson predicted 94 kg (206 lb) Hinton would be a greatly improved opponent this time.

Irwin said: "Hinton will be properly prepared and likely to raise his game more in his own back yard. It will not be easy. Hinton can hit too so Williams will have to keep his guard up and move his feet."

McCormack on Wednesday issued a stern warning to rival Williams to say he would knock him out if they met. The three-time ABA champion, at 28 the

most experienced member of the Welsh team, boxes the winner of western Samoa's Emelio Leti and Nigeria's Duncan Dokwari for at least the bronze medal.

McCormack's main motivation comes from missing a medal in the last two Games. He lost in the quarterfinal in the 1986 Games in Edinburgh, to New Zealand's Michael Kenny, and at the same stage against Scotland's Dougie Young four years later in Auckland.

McCormack and Williams have sparred together as part of the Great Britain squad and are great friends. "But friendship did not help Danny Watts," Irwin added. Watts was knocked out by a left hook from Williams in the final of the multinational event.

Canadian team manager Anderson was certain the Williams-Hinton fight would be totally different than the previous encounter. "There's no question Hinton is in better condition this time. He has worked hard on his fitness to add to his punching strength with both hands," Anderson said.

And should the Canadian champion fall, Anderson offered consolation. "He's one for the future in the Canadian team even should he be defeated here."

Williams has a 10 kg weight advantage over Hinton, but is still considered light for a super heavyweight.

Gold medal challenger Alhassan Liadi from Ghana, described by Williams as his greatest rival, has pulled out of the event.

Whoever wins the title could make a fortune if a former champion is anything to go by. Britain's current WBC champion Lennox Lewis won for Canada in Edinburgh in 1986.

The only medalist from Auckland competing this time, Tanzania's Haji Ally, who grabbed featherweight silver, moves up to lightweight.

He fights Ogu Medupi of Botswana in his first round fight. "Ally is very well prepared this time," said Tanzania's national coach Looken Swai. "He has trained hard and with all the experience gained in Auckland, I'm hoping for at least a medal."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Old French coin
4 Albertville award
9 Tea type
12 Sandy's comment
13 Spanish university city
14 Beam
15 Did needle-work
17 Have bills
18 "— favor, senior"
19 Circus car-poolers?
21 Accumulate over time
24 Rosewall and Stabler
25 "High —"
26 Recipe abbr.
28 Clear the windshield
31 Much
33 Comical Conway
35 Lily variety
36 Appointed
38 White House

DOWN

2 Hockey legend
3 E.T.'s craft
4 Elephant driver
5 World's tallest
6 Morse morsel
7 Smart guy?
8 Served the soup
9 Eye liners?
10 "Laugh-in" alumna
11 Favorable votes
16 Paramedic's skill, for short
20 Change for a fin
21 — impasse
22 Soft drink flavor
23 Homo sapiens prototype
27 Snap
29 Fairy tale baddie
30 No stay-at-home, this
32 Actress Garr
34 Short-tailed monkey
37 Hops
39 Debating-team member
42 Swiss city
44 Downed
45 Alternative to Gouda
46 Iditarod-terminus
50 Eccentric
51 Additionally
52 Carrere of "Wayne's World"
53 Wapiti

Solution time: 27 min.

LIZ BIFF GLAD
OBI EDIE RIGA
VIN TELL ASIN
EDGARALLANPOE
GAL ODD
HONEY TWO PHI
AWED ARS FLAK
VIEW STY CLUDE
MIL BRA
DAVIDALLANCOE
EVIL TANK OLD
NOVA TANK EGG
SWAN ANDY DAY

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 30
31		32		33		34		35		
36			37			38		39		40
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45	46							47		
48						49		50		51 52 53
54						55				56
57						58				59

CRYPTOQUIP

ADMZIR TDGTI GKK
OEXAKI D XUEZPT
CZTGTU QTWZTMTPT
GUDMTW ZP QUKDCTIZIR.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: SAID ONE BEE TO ANOTHER IN THE HIVE. YOU MUST GIVE ME A BUZZ SOMEDAY.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: M equals V

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.

Title retained

GOLD COAST, Australia, Aug 19: Phil Gregory scored a majority points win over challenger Steve Unterholzer on Thursday night to retain his Australian cruiserweight boxing title.