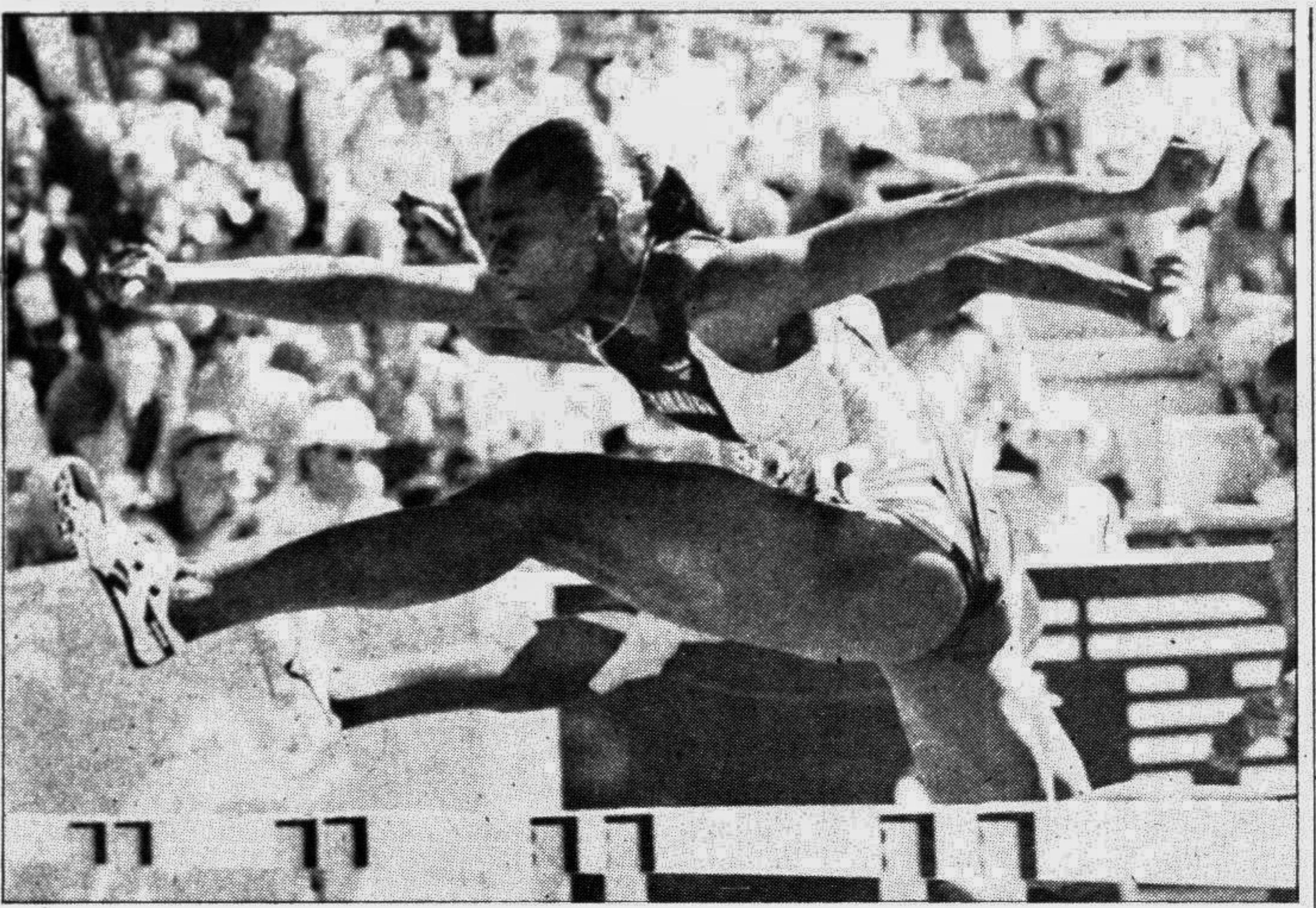


Sport



Michelle Freeman of Jamaica glides over the hurdles during the women's 100m hurdles at the Commonwealth Games in Victoria. Freeman won the event clocking 13.12 seconds.

— AFP photo

Winter's low flight to gold

Victoria 94
VICTORIA, Aug 28: It didn't matter to Neil Winter that he had won with one of the lowest pole vault clearances in a major competition. The fact that he had become the first vaulter from Wales to earn a gold medal in the event at an international meet was far more important, reports AP.

"I would have been very happy with the bronze or the silver," Winter said Saturday, after clearing 5.40 metres at the Commonwealth Games and beating heavily favoured Okkert Brits of South Africa. "I didn't expect to win. I'm very surprised, very pleased, very happy."

Brits, who had soared a South African record 5.85 metres three times this year and beaten world record-holder Sergei Bubka of Ukraine, didn't enter the competition until the bar reached 5.50. He missed all three attempts at that height.

"I feel very bad," the downcast Brits said. "There was not a lot of pressure, but I really wanted to win the gold for South Africa. The Commonwealth Games was the most important meet of the year for me."

"I feel so negative now, that I just want to swat something." Asked what he thought the South African reaction would be to his stunning failure, Brits said, "If I was looking at it myself, I would say, 'can you believe this?'

Brits' loss was one of two mishaps for the South Africans on a track and field programme that also proved disastrous for several other athletes.

The other came in the semifinals of the men's 1,500 meters, where Johan Lansman was accidentally tripped and required oxygen as he was carried off the track on a stretcher. Lansman, whose time of 3 minutes, 33.56 seconds, was the fastest among all the 1,500 entrants, later was reported in satisfactory condition.

Pat Scammell of Australia fell in the same 1,500 heat as Lansman, then got up and finished the race. But he would up last and failed to qualify for Sunday's final.

England's Clova Court stumbled over a hurdle in the women's 100-metre hurdles final and sustained a wrist injury, and Nigeria, among the favourites in the men's 400 relay, failed to advance through the semifinals because of a dropped baton on the first exchange.

In addition to winter, Saturday's gold medalists included Jamaica's Michelle Freeman in the women's hurdles at 13.12, Australia's Alison Inverarity in the women's high jump with a Games record 1.94 metres, Australia's Nicole Boegman in the women's long jump with a wind-aided 6.82 metres, Kenya's Lameck Agutu in the men's 10,000 at 28:38.22, and Canada's Carole Rouillard in the women's marathon at 2:30:41.

Rouillard, a three-time winner of the Toronto Marathon, won her first major international marathon title with a career-best time in leading a 1-2 Canadian sweep.

The 34-year-old Rouillard, running a smart, conservative race, swept past teammate Lianne Bussières just before the 40-kilometre mark in the 42.2k race through the scenic downtown and bay areas of Victoria.

A two-time Olympian and second-place finisher in the 1993 Los Angeles Marathon, Rouillard beat Bussières by 26 seconds with a time nearly a minute below her previous best of 2:31:33.

When Rouillard passed Bussières, she knew she was on the way to victory.

"She told me, 'Let's go, Carole,'" Rouillard said. "I knew then I had the gold. I just had to bring it on in."

"This was the best race of my life. I didn't expect to run a personal best. I was just going for a medal. The time just came."

Bussières finished second at 2:31:07, only 10 seconds off her career best, and Yvonne Danson of England was third at 2:32:24, her fastest ever.

Angeline Kanana of Kenya, who set the pace through the first 35 kilometers, tired and wound up sixth at 2:35:02. She was the favourite, having been the only marathoner in the 16-woman field to have broken 2:30:00, with a time of 2:29:59.

Ed Moses may make comeback

PARIS, Aug 28: Ed Moses, the most successful one-lap hurdler ever, said on Saturday he was tempted to make a comeback at the age of 39, reports Reuter.

Moses, the former world record holder and twice winner of both the world and Olympic 400 metres hurdles titles, retired six years ago following a back injury, but said he now felt fully fit after undergoing an operation.



Australia's Alison Inverarity soars over the bar to create a Commonwealth Games record in the high jump final on August 27. Inverarity took the gold medal with her first attempt of 1.94 metres.

— AFP photo

Drug controversy lingers



VICTORIA, Aug 28: A fifth competitor was banned from the Commonwealth Games for a drug offence on Saturday as controversy continued to overshadow sporting achievement, reports Reuter.

Jamaican high hurdler Robert Foster, sixth in Tuesday's final, left town in a hurry before Games officials announced that he had tested positive for the banned stimulant ephedrine.

He followed Ghanaian boxer Godson Sawah, English athletes Paul Edwards and Diane Modahl and Nigerian relay runner Udeme Ekpeyong on to the roll of dishonour.

For once, controversy took a back seat in the boxing arena.

After days of rows about the judging and accusations of cheating and racism, the competition ended in sporting fashion with four golds for the host country and two apiece for Northern Ireland and Kenya.

The penultimate day of the Games also saw Australia's first boxing gold for 16 years, thanks to bantamweight Robert Peden.

It was doping that attracted the most attention.

Games federation officials

said Foster, a university student in California, had failed to offer any satisfactory explanation for the presence of ephedrine in his urine sample.

The federation will pass on the results of the random test on Foster to the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) which can suspend him from the sport for at least three months.

The IAAF has already had a busy week with news from Victoria that shot putter Edwards and 800 metres runner Modahl had tested positive for banned drugs at meetings earlier in the season. Both flew home from Victoria without competing.

Sawah was stripped of his bantamweight boxing bronze medal on Friday for using furosemide, a banned diuretic, while Ekpeyong did not even make it as far as the Athletes' Village after being caught with drugs in his suitcase at Victoria Airport last week and sent home.

Sawah's Ghanaian team were still searching on Saturday for six members of their athletics squad who went missing on Wednesday. A Nigerian gymnast, Augustine Idahosa, disappeared on Saturday and police admitted they had no idea of the whereabouts of the absents, including a Sri Lankan boxer.

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Seles still unsure

MONTE CARLO, Monaco, Aug 28: Monica Seles, absent from the pro tennis circuit for nearly 16 months, says she is still thinking about tennis but is reluctant to say when she will return, reports AP.

"I don't like to put a date on it," Seles said in a phone interview from Monte Carlo. "It's the game I love and I just hope for my sake, soon."

"I am getting stronger every day and doing all the things I should."

Seles was in the small principality on the French Riviera to accept an award from Prince Albert and the royal family for outstanding courage in the face of adversity. Seles said she came to receive the award during the Weight Watchers Celebrity Sports Festival, but emphasised she was not competing.

The 20-year-old Seles has not played since she was stabbed in the back April, 30, 1993, during a tournament in Hamburg, Germany, by a deranged fan obsessed with Steffi Graf.

Kafelnikov storms into final

CAMMACK, NY, Aug 28: Fifth-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia and sixth-seeded Cedric Pioline of France both rallied on Saturday to reach today's final of the 313,750 dollars Hamlet Cup tennis tournament, reports Reuter.

The 20-year-old Kafelnikov, who climbed 90 points in the world rankings to No. 14 since January, rallied to beat unseeded Richie Renberg of the US 4-6, 6-2, 6-4. Kafelnikov won the last four games and the last 10 points of the match.

Pioline, runner-up at last year's US Open, took a 4-0 lead in the second set tiebreaker and then won the third set with the loss of eight points.

Kafelnikov, who has a 50-1 match record going into Sunday's final, is the third player to win 50 or more matches this year. American Pete Sampras, No. 1 in ranking, is 57-6 and Spain's Sergi Bruguera, ranked third, is 55-16.

"This is good for me going into my first US Open," Kafelnikov said. "If he wins the Hamlet final, his ranking will reach No. 11, according to an Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) spokesman.

Kafelnikov took some of the power off his first serve, which he used to beat third seeded Michael Chang Friday. "I wanted to get the ball in play and keep Richie (Renberg) on the baseline," Kafelnikov said. "If I had to depend on my second serve, it would be trouble."

The strategy worked. Kafelnikov had a 70 per cent first serve to 35 per cent for Renberg.

Renberg also committed seven double faults, three in a crucial 18-point eighth game of the third set to lose a service-break advantage.

"When he broke me twice to lead 4-2 in the third set I didn't expect to break him again," Kafelnikov said. "I didn't expect him to make three double faults."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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