

Familiar farcical finish

Sports Reporter



After Monday's exciting finale to the first phase of the Star Premier Division football league with traditional rivals Mohammedans and Abahani fighting out an entertaining one-all draw, the Star First Division came to a rather anti-climatic conclusion, with two of the three matches billed for the day being played out according to pre-conceived design.

The other match at the Mirpur Stadium, between Dhaka Wanderers and promotees Muslim Institute, both fighting to ensure their position in the senior league, was naturally a fair one although it produced similar result — a draw.

At the Dhaka Stadium, Rahmatganj and Victoria followed the pattern set in the earlier encounter involving Dhanmondi and Sadharan Bima, playing simply for playing's sake and at the same time making mockery at the strict regulation laid out by the organisers, Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA).

Rahmatganj, by virtue of this draw, ended their preliminary round campaign on top with a collection of 13 points, one point clear of Victoria.

Sadharan Bima raised their collection to 11 with their goalless draw while Dhanmondi steered well clear of the relegation zone, upping their total to seven.

At the bottom of the table, the scenario is rather plain and simple as Wanderers and Muslim Institute, who played a one-all draw yesterday, desperately try to keep their league campaigns afloat with whatever they can lay their hands on.

On completion of the nine matches, Wanderers, who have managed all their points from draws, are in a relatively safer position with six points, two points ahead of the newcomers, for whom the future looks

rather bleak.

The desperation surfaced yesterday in the match at the Mirpur Stadium with both the bottomers going flat out for a victory from the word go.

Mushtaq made the Muslim Institute players and officials ecstatic when he shot the lead only 11 minutes from the final whistle.

But their euphoria evaporated as Lito neutralised the lead only 11 minutes from the final whistle.

The second phase of the league starts from September 11 along with the Premier one, which will have a break from September 13 to 19 owing to Muktijoddha's participation in the forthcoming Independence Cup in Qatar. The race of the lesser clubs will go unhampered.

STANDINGS

	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts.
Rahmatganj MFS	9	5	3	1	19	7	13
Victoria SC	9	4	3	1	9	2	12
Farashganj SC	9	3	5	1	12	9	11
Sadharan Bima	9	4	3	2	14	8	11
Shantinagar SC	9	3	4	2	8	7	10
East End Club	9	3	3	3	13	11	9
Dhanmondi Club	9	1	5	3	8	9	7
Eskaton SS	9	2	3	4	10	13	7
Wanderers	9	0	6	3	9	13	6
Muslim Institute	9	1	2	6	6	18	4



Action from the Star First Division encounter between Sadharan Bima and Dhanmondi Club at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. The game ended in a goalless draw. — Star photo

All eyes on Italy, Sweden



LONDON, Sept 6: With the glorious memories of the World Cup barely two months old, Europe's footballers begin the long, hard slog of qualifying for the 1996 Championship on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The European season — hardly begun in some countries — moves not so much into overdrive as overload as the biggest ever qualifying campaign sees a total of 18 matches in eight groups.

A proliferation of new nations in the wake of the break-up of the Eastern Block has led to an expanded championship with the likes of Azerbaijan

trip to Scandinavian neighbours Iceland.

Their surprise World Cup success see them installed as one of the favourites but they may need to rely on their star goalkeepers if they are to grasp the single automatic qualifying berth from the five-team Group Three which includes Switzerland and Hungary.

They are likely to start without their record-breaking goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli, who has an injured left shoulder and captain Jonas Thern. He is suspended after being sent off in the World Cup semifinal against Brazil.

Bulgaria, who knocked out champions Germany to reach the World Cup semifinals, start

their campaign next month — in the same group as the Germans.

The Netherlands, beaten by Brazil in an outstanding World Cup quarter-final, will be missing several familiar faces when they play Luxembourg in Group Five, which also includes Norway and the new Czech Republic.

Retirement has ruled out Ruid Gullit, Ronald Koeman, Frank Rijkaard and Jan Wouters.

Injury means there will be no Marco van Basten, Gaston Faumont or Ulrich van Gobbel and possibly Dennis Bergkamp. Ajax's Danny Blind succeeds Koeman as captain.

Captain Dick Advocaat said:

Lalas annoyed

LONDON, Sept 6: American defender Alexi Lalas launched a stinging attack on the English Soccer Players' Union on Monday for its decision to delay the granting of work permits to two of his compatriots, reports Reuter.

"It's just another form of the lack of respect that we as American players get," Lalas said in reaction to the decision by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) to hold up work permit applications from World Cup midfielder Cobi Jones and goalkeeper Brad Friedel.

The two players have been linked with English Premier league clubs — Jones has agreed to move to Coventry and Friedel has been training with league leaders Newcastle United.

They will hear their fate on Thursday, the day after the United States take on England in a friendly at Wembley.

"I really hope the grant these guys permission to play," said the mop-haired defender, who signed for Italian club Padova at the beginning of the season after turning down the chance to play for Coventry.

"In essence it's you guys that are missing out on two tremendous characters and two players who could add an unbelievable element to English football."

"When you don't allow players of this calibre to play it starts to look like a lack of respect for these players and in turn for our national programme."

Lalas, one of the characters of the World Cup finals, said he had not ruled out a move to England in the future.

"I'd love to play in England but I'm not going to go some place where American players are not wanted," he said.



THOMAS RAVELLI

"It is a pity to lose a lot of experience but the others have ripened as well."

Defending champions Denmark, who reached the last finals only as a late replacement for the barred Yugoslavia, open against one of the new states from the Yugoslav break-up — Macedonia.

Coach Richard Moeller Nielsen admits concern over a shortage of goalkeepers and includes Dundee's Marten Wieghorst, who scored on his international debut in a 2-1 win over Finland last month.

Bent Christensen, who switched from Olympiakos Piraeus to Spain's Compostela recently, returns to the team after a long absence.

"We're short on strikers but Christensen is the type who has proved he can score," said Nielsen. His side face a tough task in qualifying from Group Two which includes Spain and Belgium.

Spain, who denied the Danes a place in the World Cup, will want to build on the success of USA '94 were they were one of seven European sides to reach the quarter-finals.

They start with a trip to Cyprus.

WB booters in the city

Sports Reporter

A junior soccer squad from South 24 Parganas of West Bengal arrived in the city yesterday to play four exhibition matches, starting with one against Bangladesh Krira Shiksha Protisshthan (BKSP) today.

The youngsters from West Bengal, in Dhaka following an invitation extended by the Narayanjan Rifles Club, will play the other friendlies against selections from Narayanjan, Tangail and Narsingdi.

Bangladesh Bank football ends

Sports Reporter

Motijheel office outfit clinched the second Bangladesh Bank inter-office football championship when they beat Head Office team 3-0 in the final at Sylhet Stadium on last Sunday.

Seven teams, split into two groups, took part in the six-day meet organised by the Bangladesh Bank Club of Dhaka.

Kamaluddin Ahmed, the deputy-governor of Bangladesh Bank, distributed prizes among the winners on the concluding day.

Triangular golf from Sept 16

Golf in Bangladesh looks set to enter a new era as Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani Krira Chakra commit themselves to participate in the triangular golf tournament on September 16 at the Dhaka Club Golf Course, says a press release.

The meet is being organised by Dhaka Club Limited and is sponsored by Bengal Aviation Ltd.

Both Abahani KC and Mohammedan Sporting would be represented by some of the country's best golfers while Dhaka Club as hosts is also expected to field a strong team.

The competition will involve ten players in each team and will be held off at 7 AM on September 16. It is expected that there will be a large turnout of spectators in the first ever meeting of the two giants of Bangladesh sports on a golf course.

FIFA ban on Pakistan goes

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 6: FIFA, the world soccer governing body, has readmitted Pakistan after five weeks out in the wilderness, Asian football officials announced today, reports AFP.

The move follows the Pakistan Football Federation's suspension of former general secretary Hafiz Salman Butt for 10 years. He was accused of embezzlement and misconduct.

FIFA decided to lift its suspension of the Pakistan Federation on hearing of the ban. The Federation was recognised again as of September 5.

An indefinite suspension was imposed by FIFA five weeks ago, after a recommendation by the Kuala Lumpur based Asian Football Confederation, because of mounting squabbling within the Pakistan Federation.

The AFC ran out of patience when two separate Pakistan teams turned up for an Asian Youth Championship qualifying tournament in Dubai. One was selected by Butt another by Pakistan Federation president Mian Mohammad Azhar.

Butt has been accused of sending his own side, Wohaib, abroad as official representative teams for Pakistan.

AFC general secretary Peter Velappan welcomed the FIFA decision. "We hope the Pakistan Federation can sort out all the problems involved in this matter and that they can resume an active role in Asian football."

Gazza may leave Lazio

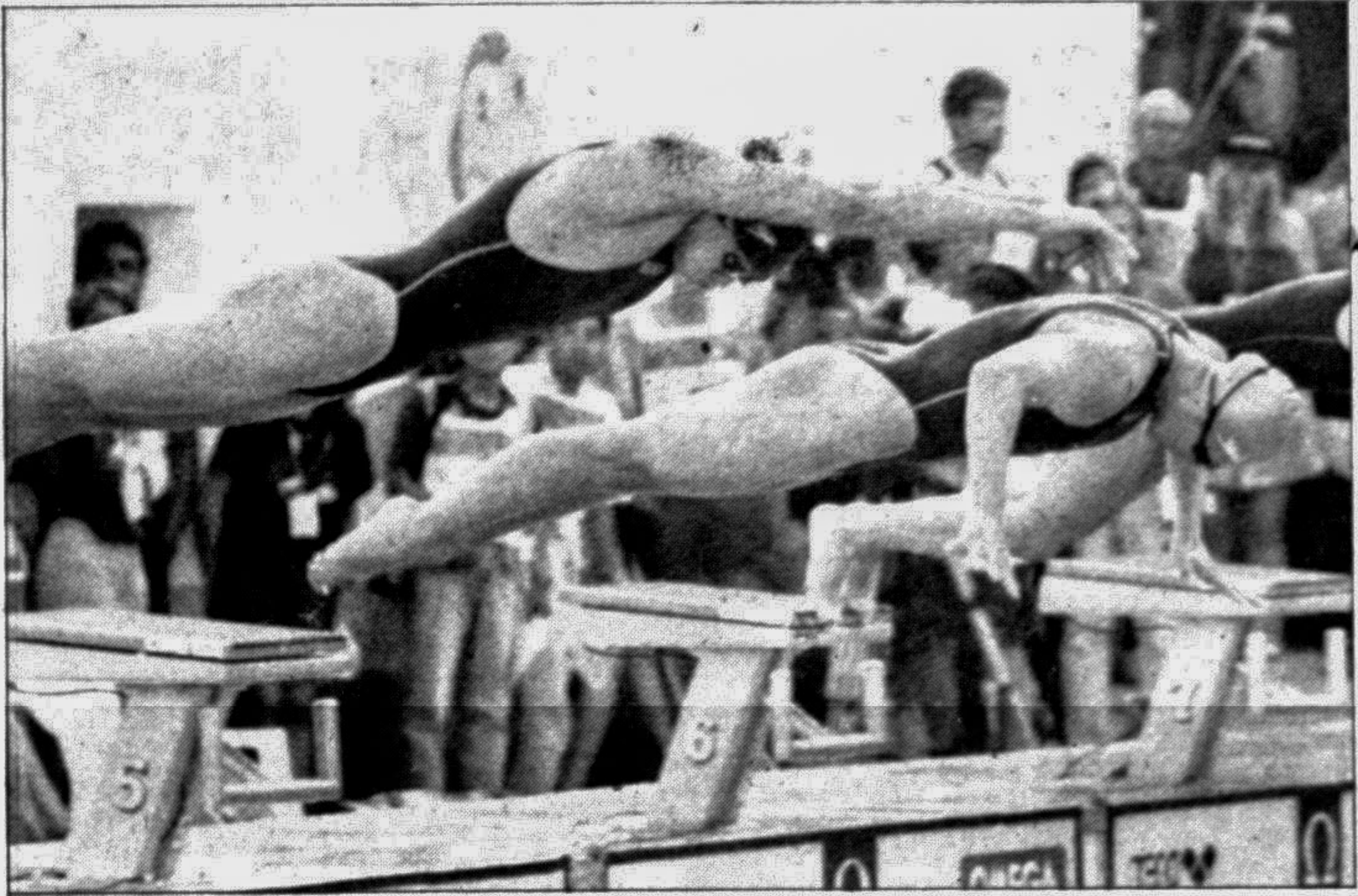
LONDON, Sept 6: England's talented but problem-prone international midfielder Paul Gascoigne has hinted he may leave Italian club Lazio and return home this year, reports Reuter.

Gascoigne, whose inspirational play helped take England to the semifinals of the 1990 World Cup in Italy, has been plagued by injury and poor form since he joined the Rome club four years ago.

"I'm definitely thinking about whether to come home this year," said Gascoigne who is currently recovering from his latest injury — a broken right leg. "We'll just have to see when I'm fit and playing again."

"Things haven't gone as smoothly as I wanted them to. Now at the end of this year I'm really going to think about what I'm going to do."

"What I do will be my decision. It will not be for football reasons it will be for my own personal reasons. I was 23 when I signed with Lazio and I'll be 28 next year."



Le Jingyi of China dives into the pool at the start of the women's 100m freestyle final during the World Championships in Rome on Sept 5. Le clocked 54.01 seconds to break the world record with compatriot Lu Bin (R) finishing second and Germany's Frenziska van Almsick third. — AFP photo

Le leads Chinese sweep



ROME, Sept 6: Le Jingyi, once a sickly child, eclipsed the 100 metres freestyle world record as

China swept three titles at the World Swimming Championships on Monday, reports Reuter.

China, who have already grabbed three diving golds, mopped up the women's events on the opening day of swimming in the Foro Italic pool.

But Hungary's Norbert Rozsa and Finland's Antti Kasvio scored dramatic wins in the men's 100 metres breaststroke and 200 metres freestyle to ensure other national anthems were aired at victory ceremonies.

Le, 19, and 17-year-old teammate Lu Bin both bettered the world mark of American Olympic silver medalist Jenny Thompson, who managed only fourth place.

Double world short-course champion Le took charge from the start, turning more than a second inside world record schedule and resisting Lu's late challenge to touch in 54.01, 0.47 seconds faster than the mark Thompson set in Indianapolis on March 1, 1992.

"When I was a little girl my body was very weak and I was always getting ill, so my mother got me into swim-

ming," Le, now 1.75 metres tall and powerfully athletic, said.

Lu clocked 54.15 for the silver but ended the evening with a gold when she anchored China to victory in the women's 4x200 metres freestyle relay.

"The Chinese were close to 54 seconds in a year they'll be swimming under 54 and I don't think I'll ever be able to reach that level," said Germany's European champion Franziska van Almsick, bronze medalist in 54.77.

Dai Guohong won the women's 400 metres individual medley from Americans Allison Wagner and Kristine Quance to succeed compatriot Lin Li as world champion before the relay completed the golden hat-trick.

Four Chinese swimmers, three of them internationals, have received suspensions after positive dope tests in the past two years and the doping debate is an inevitable topic in swimming.

Le, however, said brilliant coaches and hard work were the secrets of the team's success, while constant doping questions angered them.

"Now that China is making a name for itself in swimming everyone is talking about doping all of a sudden. I think it's all just jealousy," she said.

The rest need, for now at least, feel no jealousy for

China's male swimmers who did not figure in either of Monday's finals.

Rozsa, who returned to Europe last winter after abandoning plans to settle in Australia, became the first man to retain the 100 metres breaststroke crown in the 21-year history of the championships.

Virtually unknown before he won the title in Perth, Australia, in January 1991, Olympic silver medalist Rozsa overhauled fellow Hungarian Karoly Guttler on the second length to win in one minute 1.24 seconds.

Guttler, Olympic silver medalist in 1988, clocked 1.01.44 but at least kept hold of the 1.00.95 world record he set at last year's European Championships in Sheffield, England.

European champion Kasvio hunted down Anders Holmertz on the final length of the 200 freestyle after the Swedish veteran had, as usual, made all the pace only to be passed at the death.

"At the 100-metre split I was under Giorgio Lamberti's world record. I felt good. I continued to swim my race but I assure you the last lap was terrible," Holmertz, twice Olympic silver medalist at the distance, said.

"I'm not satisfied with my time. It must be my destiny to finish second."

China's success under cloud



ROME, Sept 6: China's phenomenal start in the women's swimming at the World Championships

has been greeted with widespread cynicism among their rivals, many of whom are convinced systematic doping lies behind the republic's success, reports AFP.

Le Jingyi's devastating swim to smash the 100m freestyle world record capped a Chinese sweep of the first three women's golds on offer on Monday night, a trend that seemed set to continue after Tuesday's qualifying heats.

An unbelievable start and a storming final leg allowed the 19-year-old Le to clock a remarkable 54.01 sec, slicing nearly half a second off the previous mark set by American Jenny Thompson two years ago.

Britain's Karen Pickering, who finished eighth in the 100m final, refused to believe Le's performance was simply the product of hard work.

"That was a girls' swim,"

she said. "There are guys in our national championship who are not doing that kind of time."

Le's time is actually faster than the men's national records of 18 of the countries who register times with the International Swimming Federation. As recently as 1961 it would have been good enough for a men's world record.

American Kristine Quance was even less guarded in her comments after taking bronze in the 200m individual medley won by 16-year-old Dai Guohong.

"All the swimmers are talking about them," she said. "They're so many, even their voices."

Referring to the powerfully-built Dai, she added: "I've never seen a 16-year-old like that before. In fact I've never seen any kind of woman like that before."

Despite the permanent cloud of speculation that has hovered over the Chinese women since they began to rewrite the record books at

the beginning of the decade, little evidence has emerged to substantiate the rumours.

Systematic testing of all the gold medalists at last year's world shortcourse championships, where the Chinese swept all before them, failed to produce a single positive result.

In February, however, Zhong Wiyue, a world short-course record holder in the 50 and 100m butterfly, became the first Chinese swimmer to test positive for drugs and Ren Xin, a triple gold medalist at the Goodwill Games, was banned for two years last month after another failed test.

But the rumours that these represented only the tip of an iceberg were angrily refuted by Le after her triumph here.

"I get very angry when I hear people talking about doping," she said. "When Europeans and Americans win and set records nobody accuses them of anything."

"It's all just jealousy, we owe our success to our brilliant coaches."

Blatter's call to build on WC USA success

LONDON, Sept 6: FIFA is urging soccer clubs to take better care of their fans if they are not to waste a golden opportunity generated by the success of the World Cup finals, reports Reuter.

General secretary Sepp Blatter says the slick packaging of the World Cup had aroused greater interest in the sport. But clubs had to build on that success and not dismiss it as some quaint souvenir to look back on over the next four years.

"The only way that spectators can be motivated to keep flocking to the stadium is by satisfying fundamental needs. In future spectators will have to be provided with more and better services," Blatter writes in the latest edition of FIFA news.

"The wrapping for our sport is all too often not enticing enough," he said.

"Live football suffers from stiff competition from televised football, so more will have to be done to meet the needs of the crowd in the ground."

He urged clubs to improve their stadium, provide adequate parking, transport, food, comfortable seats and better toilets.

Blatter said soccer had to have the right wrapping to attract the fans.

"The World Cup finals were an eminent example of how important the right packaging is for football. The spick-and-span stadia with easy access, seats only and food and beverage stands combined with slick organisation inside the stadium all made for a friendly and sporty atmosphere."

"Our sport must be able to roll the publicity drums with the help of the wrapping as well as action on the pitch."

He also called for a ban on radio and television journalists approaching players on the team benches and urged clubs to tidy up stadia and look after their pitches.

"The enclosure in a stadium is the shop window of our sport and must not be used as a fairground for people to loaf around aimlessly," he said.

"There is no need for more than a few security officers or first-aid helpers around the pitch during play."

OCA plans a way out

TOKYO, Sept 6: The head of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has hinted at withdrawing an invitation to Taiwan's President Lee Teng-Hui to attend next month's Asian Games, Kyodo news agency said today, reports Reuter.

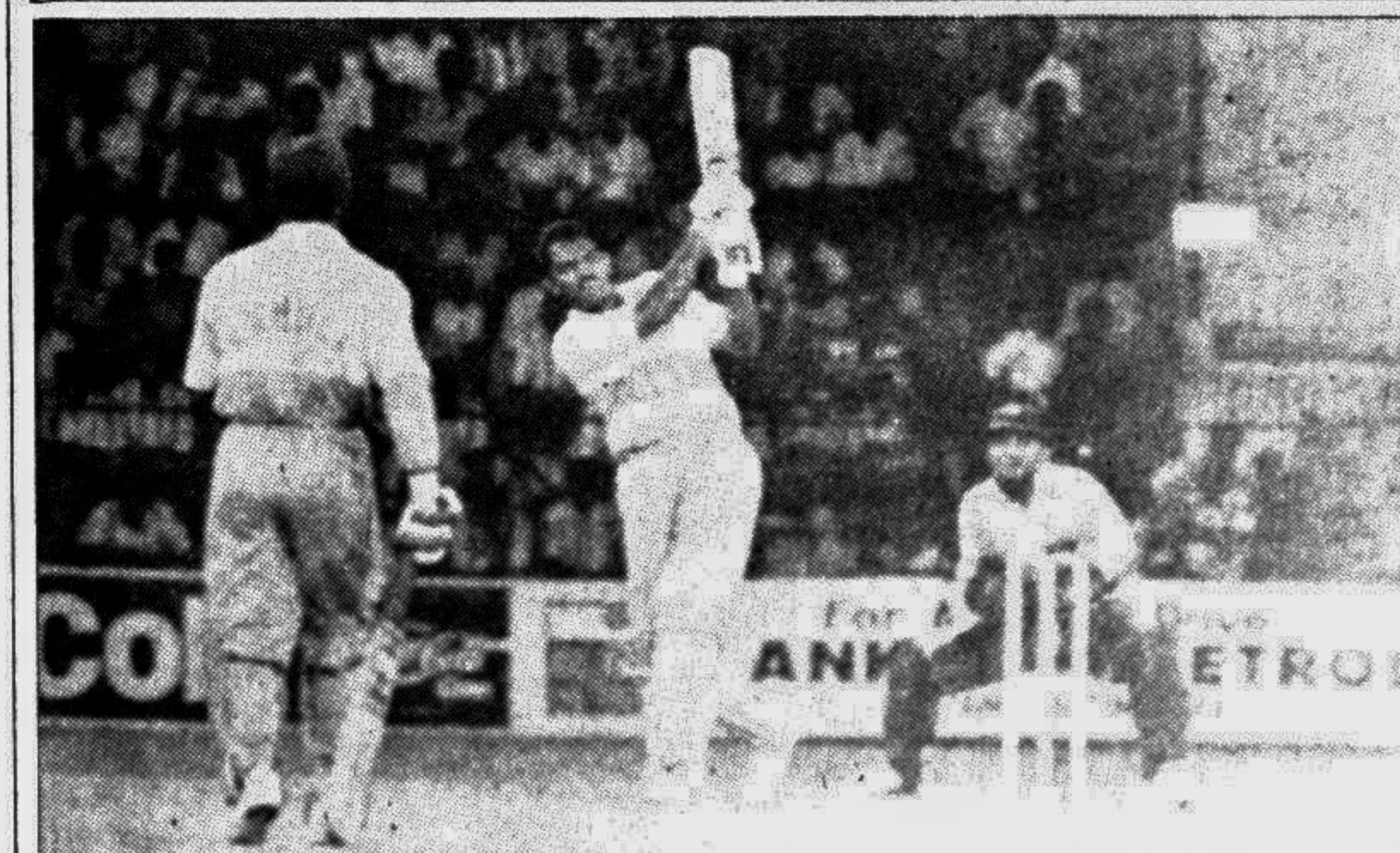
The continents top sporting nation China has threatened to boycott the Games, due to open on October 2 in the Japanese city of Hiroshima, if Lee attends.

"My invitation to Taiwan's President Lee is proper. But there's a possibility it will be changed," Kyodo quoted the OCA president, Ahmad Al-Fahad of Kuwait, as saying.

The invitation, extended earlier this summer by the OCA president, is causing major headaches for Japanese officials.

Kyodo said Ahmad was speaking in Paris after a meeting there on Monday with International Olympic Committee members from China, Taiwan and Japan.

Kyodo said his remarks apparently suggested the OCA chief intended to seek a substitute Taiwanese representative more acceptable to Beijing.



Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin plays a lofted shot off the bowling of Sri Lanka's Ruwan Kalpage (not in picture) during the opening match of the four-nation Singer World Series cricket tournament in Colombo on Sept 5. Sri Lanka beat India by seven wickets in a rain-reduced fixture. — AFP photo