

Sport



American speedskater Bonnie Blair races to a gold medal in the women's 500-metre event at the World Cup in Obihiro, Japan, yesterday. Blair won with a time of 41.20 seconds.

— AFP photo

FINA still not satisfied

STAVANGER, Norway, Dec 3: A top International Swimming Federation (FINA) official said on Friday he doubted there was systematic doping in China despite a rash of positive tests at the Asian Games, reports Reuters.

FINA honorary secretary Gunnar Werner, who called for tougher punishment for doping offenders, said action could theoretically be taken against member federations.

"The FINA rules allow suspension or action against any member who violates the rules if it is proved that the (member) federation is itself behind this," Werner said on the eve of the European Sprint Swimming Championships.

Seven swimmers were among 11 Chinese competitors reported to have tested positive at the Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan, two months ago.

Asked at a press conference if there could be any doubt that doping was systematic in China, Werner replied: "Yes, very much so. It's not systematic as far as I understand it."

"We have no reason to believe that the (Chinese) Federation is behind this, absolutely no reason."

The 11 positive samples were taken by Asian Games organisers. Four other swimmers have returned positive dope tests in the past two years.

FINA themselves recently carried out 33 tests — 29 a week before the Games and four during them — and have announced one positive. China's women's world 400 metres freestyle champion Yang Aihua who has been suspended for two years.

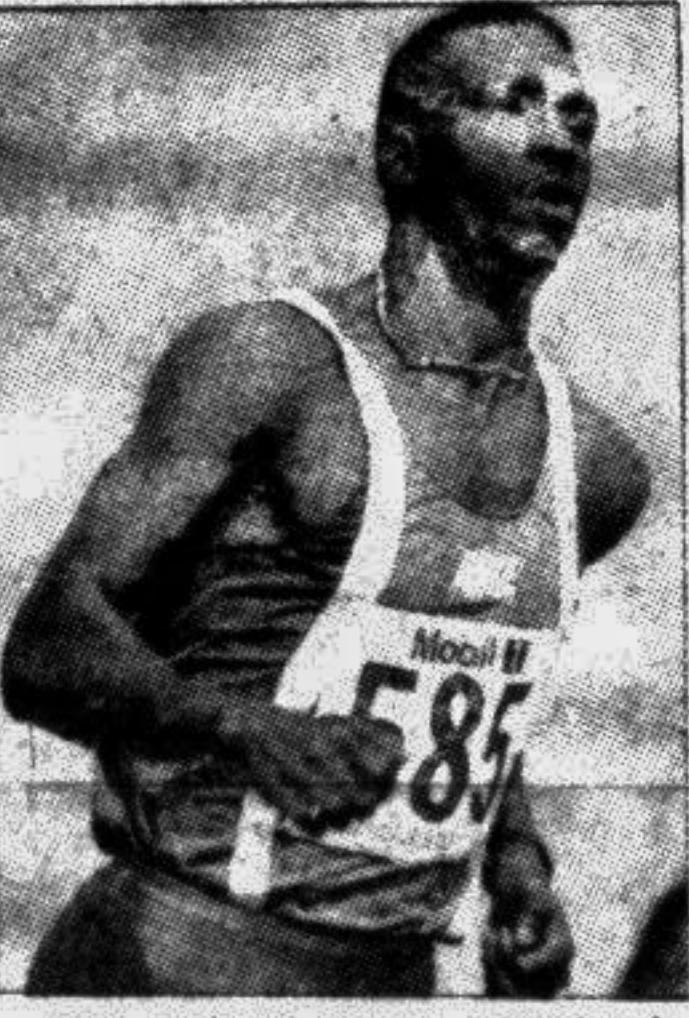
Werner said a second Chinese swimmer — like Yang, among those listed by the Games organisers — had also returned a positive FINA test according to analysis of the first "A" sample.

The Swedish official refused to identify the swimmer but said the second "B" sample would be tested in a Tokyo laboratory next Monday.

Werner said Malcolm Cameron, a member of FINA's medical committee, would try to persuade fellow members of the International Olympic Committee's medical commission to raise the ban for a first serious doping offence from two years to four.

FINA could act unilaterally but it operates with other federations within a framework agreed with the IOC aimed at harmonising anti-doping sancti-

Michael Johnson honoured



ST. LOUIS, Dec 3: Michael Johnson ran only three races at 400 metres this year, but he made a huge impression.

Johnson, 27, was honoured with the Jesse Owens Award Friday night as track and field's top performer. His victories, the three best times in the world for the year, extended his winning streak in the 400 to 26 in a row, reports AP.

"If you run 10 or 15 races a year, you can slack off on a few," Johnson said. "If you only run three races, you've got to make sure they're all fast."

Johnson, of Rockwall, Texas, hasn't lost in the 400 since 1989. This year he ran times of 44.32 and 44.04 seconds in August, and had a world-best 43.90 in Madrid, Spain, in September.

He also had the fastest time run by an American in 1994 at 200 metres, a 19.94 clocking at a meet in Monaco.

Johnson said he'd run both events next year at the World Championships in Göteborg, Sweden, and also would double in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Johnson edged two-time winner Jackie Joyner-Kersee, who set American records both indoors and outdoors in the long jump, in the closest balloting in history by media and the US athletics community. The award was handed out at the annual USA Track & Field convention.

the Asian Games.

FINA, aiming for 100 out-of-competition tests this year, has so far conducted 80, and Werner said they wanted to do more, subject to budget constraints.

The medical committee wanted between 200 and 500," he said.

Swedish coach Hans Chrunak, who last year angered the Chinese by suggesting their women swimmers might be on anabolic steroids, expressed satisfaction over the Asian Games revelations.

A BLOW FOR BEIJING

Meanwhile, Beijing has been struck from the World Cup swimming calendar but apparently not because of a threatened boycott.

The German swimming federation announced this week their swimmers would boycott all major swimming events in China following confirmation that 11 Chinese competitors — seven of them swimmers — had tested positive at the Asian Games two months ago.

But Beijing was withdrawn two days ago as one of eight scheduled venues for the World Cup because the meet organisers had failed to confirm it would go ahead, Georges Kiehl, a World Cup coordinator, said on Friday.

Kiehl, representing the French federation, said the reason appeared to be financial.

He said a definite answer had been expected by the end of October but by the end of November there had still been no response from the Chinese.

"We couldn't go any further. It starts in four weeks and there's bookings and tickets," Kiehl said.

Swimming's increasingly crowded international calendar is causing officials big problems.

Plans to hold World Long-Course Championships every two years instead of every four threaten a direct clash with European and other regional championships.

Similarly, planned biennial World Short-Course Championships would conflict with events like the European Sprint Championships.

European Swimming League official Soeren Korbo said on Friday the European Sprint Championships might be shifted year from their customary December slot to early the following year, possibly April, to prevent a clash with the World Short-Course Championships in Rio de Janeiro.

Blair blazes in Obihiro meet

OBIHIRO, Dec 3: American Bonnie Blair easily won the women's 500-metre race in the World Cup Obihiro meet Saturday, reports AP.

Blair, the gold medalist in the 500 and 1,000 meter races at the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics, was timed in 41.20 seconds, 0.26 seconds ahead of Germany's Franziska Schenck, who was clocked in 41.46.

The third place finisher was Japan's Shihoko Kusunose in 41.49.

The women's 1,000-metre race and the men's 500 and 1,000 metre races were scheduled for later Saturday.

A field of 71 skaters from 14 nations are competing in the two-day tournament in Obihiro, 1,000 Kilometers (620 miles) northeast of Tokyo in one of Japan's coldest winter areas.

NBL badminton

Sports Reporter

Title contenders Biman recorded their third successive win in the NBL First Division badminton league with a thumping 5-0 victory over minnows Dhaka Badminton Club in one of the three matches held at NSC wooden floor gymnasium yesterday.

In the best of five sets engagement, Biman Shuttlers Rashed, Sarwar, Mahboob and Rafiqul were so overwhelmingly powerful that they did not even concede a set.

The pattern was all the same in the Mohammadi-Dilkusha match with the defending champions posting a 5-0 victory for their second consecutive victory.

In the other match of the day, Surja Tarun also earned a 5-0 victory over Sputnik International.

Orient Bread kabaddi

Sports Reporter

Jurain Janata recorded a facile 42-22 win over newcomers Public Health Employees Welfare Association in one of the two Orient Bread Kabaddi league matches played at the court adjacent to the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

In a rather one-sided affair, the winners took an unassailable 22-6 lead at the breather.

In the other match of the day, Bara Goalia Samaj Kallayan Sangha thrashed Maniknagar Kabaddi Club 51-26.

Gandaria Famous EC formed

Sports Reporter

Gandaria Famous Sporting Club elected a 39-member executive body for the next two-year term with Saidur Rahman as president.



SAIDUR RAHMAN

Mahbubul Alam Khan is the general secretary while Aminul Islam, the Mothamedan skipper, is one of the three joint-secretaries in the committee formed on November 28.

Comaneci ends homecoming tour

BUCHAREST, Dec 3: Nadia Comaneci ended her homecoming tour of Romania on Friday, promising to return next year to marry her fiance and fellow-gymnast Bart Conner, reports Reuter.

Comaneci, who in 1976 became the first gymnast to score an Olympic perfect 10 was feted as a national hero on her first return to Romania since fleeing into self-imposed exile five years ago.

"I'm happy because people didn't forget me," Nadia told reporters at Bucharest's Otopeni Airport.

Conner, a double gold medalist at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, said they would marry next year and have ceremonies in both the United States and Romania.

Their engagement was formally blessed by the Romanian orthodox church during Comaneci's 10-day stay, all carefully crafted and documented for a forthcoming US television story.

The 32-year-old Comaneci also performed in a gymnastics show wearing a crimson leotard and showing that what she had lost in sprightliness she had gained in glamour since winning three gold medals as a 14-year-old in Montreal.

World Cup final against Netherlands today

Pakistan know the score



SYDNEY, Dec 3: Pakistan know exactly what they must do to defeat defending champions the Netherlands in Sunday's final of the World Cup field hockey tournament, reports AP.

Pakistan need to penetrate the Dutch defence with their own free-flowing attacks and to avoid conceding any penalty corners, Easter said.

The Dutch have been ruthless from short corners throughout the two-week tournament.

Twelve of their 24 goals have come from set piece plays — at which Floris Jan Bovender and Taco van den Honert are devastating.

"Their penalty corners are certainly better than ours, so we'll have to be certain not to give them too many opportunities," said Pakistan manager Abdul Rashid.

"But if we play our normal game I believe we can best them."

Pakistan are three-time winners of the World Cup but face a Dutch side that is unbeaten in their last 27 games.

Coach Roelant Oltmans led the Dutch women to victory in the World Cup in Sydney four years ago and is looking to complete a double triumph Down Under. He rejects the perception the Netherlands

also a "short corner team."

"We have the best short corner specialist in the world in Bovender, but we have scored 12 goals from the field here," Oltmans said. "We certainly don't play only for short corners."

The final is a repeat of the 1990 final, in which the Netherlands beat the host nation 3-1 in front of a 65,000 spectators.

Bovender scored twice in the 1990 final and also set up this final appearance with two penalty corner strikes as the Dutch downed top seeded Australia 3-1 in their semifinal on Friday.

The Dutch played with tactical awareness in that game, depriving the Australian inner of space and stretching the ball wide when they attacked.

"I think we're still improving and still have to improve some more," said Oltmans.

"How your forwards play comes down to how they are fed by the midfield."

"If we can feed our forwards very quickly, which at the moment happens probably only one or two times a game, we can score more goals."

Pakistan's hopes rest largely on captain and midfielder Shahbaz Ahmed, who has been troubled by a ham-

string injury over the past week but still played well in Friday's semifinal victory over Germany.

"It is always very hard to play the Netherlands and we know we can't afford to give them penalty corners," Shahbaz said.

After 10 years without a major title, the Pakistanis won this year's Champions Trophy in March, but then failed — for the first time — to make the final of the Asian Games.

In matches played Saturday, India got a 45th minute goal from Mukesh Kumar and defeated England 1-0 in the game to decide fifth and sixth places.

Argentina drew 3-3 with South Korea but then won a penalty shootout 5-3 to seal seventh place in the 12-nation tournament.

In play-offs to decide other placings, Spain drew 1-1 with Belgium and then won 8-7 on penalty strokes and South Africa beat Belarus 3-2 when captain Wayne Graham punched on a penalty corner rebound with 37 seconds remaining.

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will contest 9th and 10th place on Sunday and Belgium and Belarus will play-off for 11th and 12th.

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