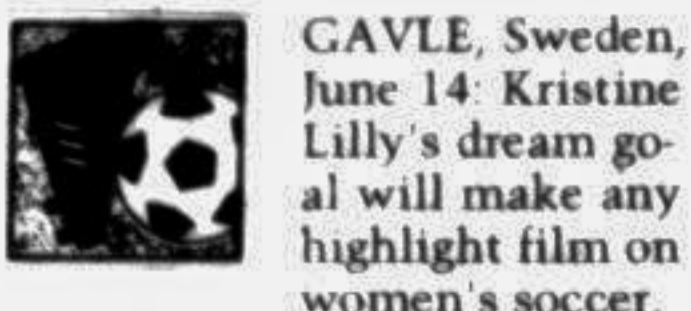


Women's World Cup

US move into semifinals



GAVLE, Sweden, June 14: Kristine Lilly's dream goal will make any highlight film on women's soccer.

She's parked in central midfield, 35 yards from the Japanese goal, and ready to take a free-kick after eight minutes. She never hesitates despite the long distance.

Lilly bends the ball powerfully with her left foot over a wall of players and it flies high into the net past goalie Junko Ozawa, who appears to be screened, reports AP.

It's a goal Lilly probably will never forget. It was the kick in this women's World Cup.

The Japanese were stunned.

"That free-kick goal hurt us," said Japan's coach Tamotsu Suzuki after the defending world champions' 4-0 victory that set up a semifinal against Norway on Thursday.

Lilly, one of nine returning members of the 1991 championship squad, has scored 36 times in a record 94 international appearances for the United States. But this was by far her most spectacular goal.

"For sure," she said. "I've been practicing and watching Michelle Akers doing them over and over. To hit one finally, it feels really good."

"If you hit it perfectly, the ball kind of knuckles and I guess that's what happened. I saw the goalie go to the left and I thought she would get it, but then it faded."

US coach Tony DiCiccio said Lilly, who scored her second goal with a shot from inside the penalty box to put the Americans ahead 2-0 in the 42nd minute, is having an outstanding championship.

"She's played well in many different positions," DiCiccio said. "She's playing with a lot of heart and soul. It was great that she bent that first one in. That got us a big lift."

"In 1991, Kristine had a solid World Cup. She was hurt in the first game, we lost her for 14 minutes or so. But this World Cup she's gone up another level or two. Not only is she playing solid, but she's making the big play. The play that turns the game around. I'm so happy for her, because our most consistent player, game in and game out, is Kristine Lilly."

Lilly, a 23-year-old from Wilton, Connecticut, spent last season in the Swedish First Division with Tyreso outside Stockholm, along with US team members Akers, Julie Foudy and goalkeeper Mary Harvey. She plays a more offensive role in midfield now than in the inaugural World Championship

four years ago.

"I was more worried about defence in the first World Cup," she said. "Our defence is so strong now that I can make those runs forward and they can cover for me. I'm getting the opportunity to score because other people are making an effort to get the ball. That's the important part."

Tiffany Milbrett and Tisha Venturini scored the other goals for the United States, which is unbeaten in the tournament after winning two and tying one in the round-robin phase last week.

Milbrett is a World Cup rookie from Portland, Oregon. She replaced Akers when the star striker sustained a mild concussion and a banged up knee after just six minutes in the round-robin opener (3-3) against China. She and Lilly both have scored three goals.

Thursday's semifinal against Norway in Vasters will be a rematch of the 1991 final in China, when Akers scored both goals in a 2-1 victory.

Akers, considered the world's top female player, was cleared by the doctors to play Tuesday and was in uniform, but never got on the field.

"If we absolutely needed her today, she would have been in the lineup," DiCiccio

said.

Norway, the only team to finish the preliminaries with a 3-0 record, beat Denmark 3-1 in another quarterfinal in Karlstad. Linda Medalen and Hege Riise clinched it with goals in the 62nd and 84th minutes for Norway, who took the lead in the 21st on Gro Espeseth's goal.

Gitte Krogh netted a late goal for Denmark, the first Norway has allowed in the championships after blanking Nigeria 8-0, England 2-0 and Canada 7-0 in the preliminaries.

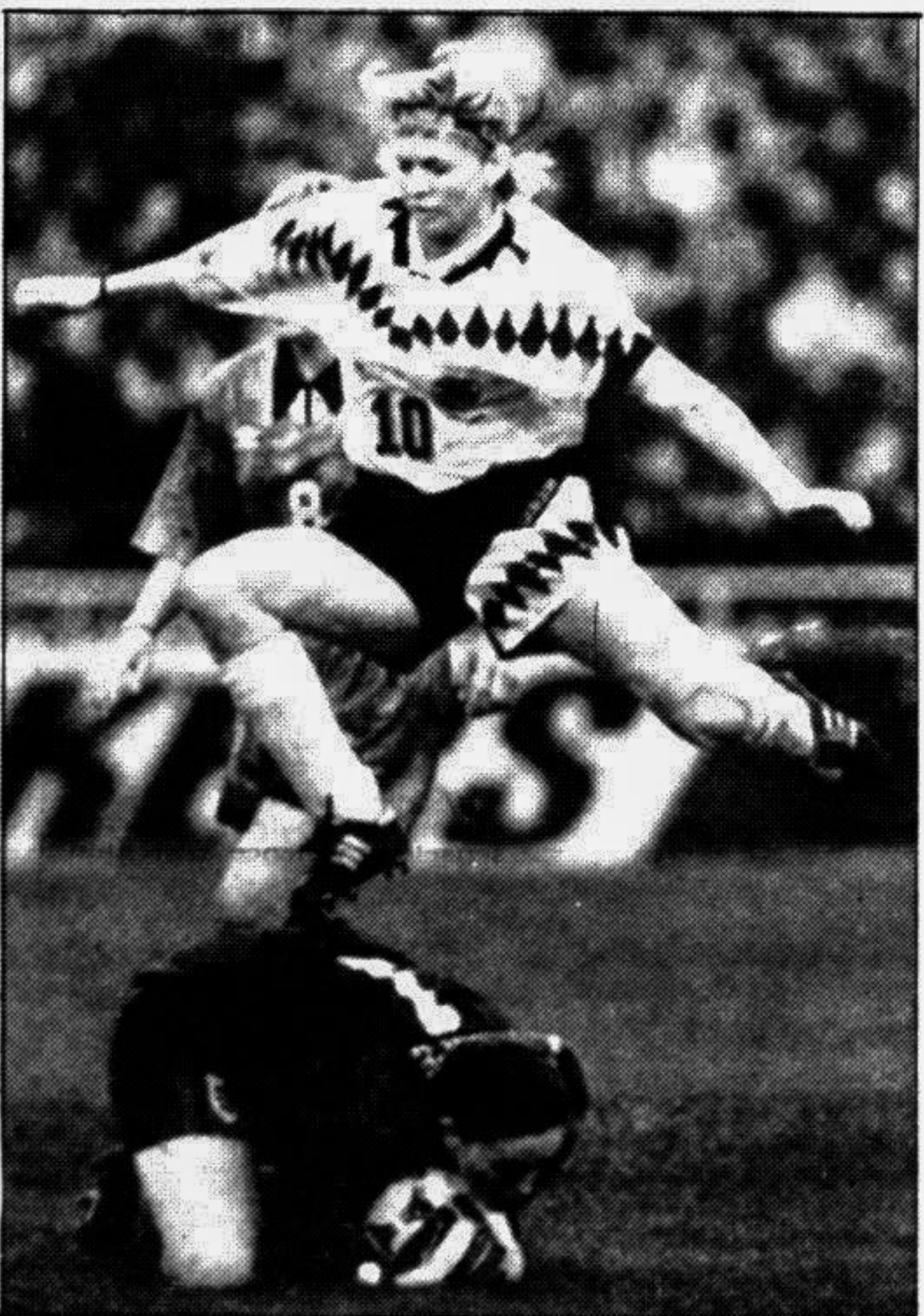
"We took over the game in the second half because we have physically stronger team. The Danish girls became tired," said Norwegian coach Even Pellerud.

"We are well prepared to play the US in the semifinals, but we know that it will be a very difficult task. They have a very strong team. But so have we..."

China, who eliminated 1991 World Cup bronze medalist Sweden 4-3 on penalty kicks after the teams tied 1-1, will meet European champion Germany in Thursday's other semifinal.

Germany shut out England 3-0 in Vasters on goals by Martina Voss, Maren Meinert and Heidi Mohr.

Germany's captain Silvia Neid Neid jumps over England's custodian Pauline Cope during their women's World Cup soccer quarter-finals match in Voester on 13 June. Germany won the match 3-0.



Germany's captain Silvia Neid Neid jumps over England's custodian Pauline Cope during their women's World Cup soccer quarter-finals match in Voester on 13 June. Germany won the match 3-0. — AFP/UNB photo

Maradona's choice Pele

BUENOS AIRES, June 14: Diego Maradona said on Tuesday that soccer great Pele should take over as president of the world soccer body FIFA from fellow Brazilian Joao Havelange, whose "cycle has finished," reports Reuter.

"Without Pele everything would be difficult because a man would take over who knows about football and who would defend players," Maradona declared on Argentine television.

"And he would also work towards and speed up the formation of a union for players," said the former Argentine captain, referring to one of his long-held dreams.

Maradona has had numerous clashes with Havelange and FIFA's general secretary Joseph Blatter, including calling them "bastards."

But, at the same time as calling for Havelange to step down, Maradona also said he will send a fax or travel to FIFA's Zurich headquarters to ask them to cut his playing ban by one month.

The 34-year-old midfielder said he is anxious to start playing for his new club Boca Juniors at the beginning of the Argentine season in August. He received a 15-month ban for testing positive to banned substances at 1994's World Cup finals in the United States.

"I'm desperate to play for Boca," Maradona said.

pleat replaces Francis

SHEFFIELD, England, June 14: Former Tottenham manager David Pleat Wednesday returned to the top flight in English soccer when he took over at Sheffield Wednesday on a 2-year contract, reports AP.

Pleat, 50, moves from Division One Luton, the club he also left nine years ago for one-year spell at White Hart Lane. He took Tottenham to the FA Cup final but Spurs lost to Coventry.

At Wednesday, he replaces former Sampdoria player Trevor Francis, who left the club three weeks ago when his contract was terminated.

Pleat has decided to delay a decision on who will be his No 2 at Wednesday amid speculation that it could be talented English international forward Chris Waddle.

Former Olympique Marseille player Waddle, currently on Wednesday's roster, played under Pleat at Tottenham and reports have suggested he would be interested in being a player-coach at Sheffield.

Bremen brace for Cardoso

BREMEN, Germany, June 14: Freiburg's Argentine midfielder Rodolfo Cardoso signed on Tuesday to join German League leaders Werder Bremen next season, reports Reuter.

Cardoso, who has agreed a contract until June 1998, is expected to fill the gap left by Austrian international midfielder Andreas Herzog who is joining record champions Bayern Munich next season.

Bremen hold a one-point lead in the Bundesliga ahead of Saturday's final game of the season.

Media crazes Christie

LONDON, June 14: Linford Christie launched a new attack on the media on Wednesday with an angry outburst against a group of reporters and photographers at London's Heathrow airport, reports Reuter.

The Olympic and world 100 metres champion, who said on Monday he would quit racing at the end of the season because of his treatment by the media, faced a group of about eight reporters as he checked in on a flight to Nuremberg.

As the cameras began to click the 35-year-old sprinter yelled: "Do you want some?"

"If you lot want some, you lot want some you'll have something different to write about OK?"

"I don't want to see bloodshed on this airport but if you want some..." he continued.

At security, Christie called over officials and was taken to his plane by car, avoiding more media and public attention.

"He was extremely angry and was complaining that he was being harassed," a security man said.

Akram Lancs' livewire

LONDON, June 14: Pakistan all-rounder Wasim Akram blasted 64 off just 47 balls to lift Lancashire to a remarkable two-wicket Benson and Hedges Cup victory over Worcestershire on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Worcestershire's supporters were already planning their third consecutive trip to Lord's following last year's double visit for the Benson and Hedges and Natwest Trophy finals when Neil Fairbrother was sixth out.

At that stage Lancashire needed 127 off 17 overs with only Akram's determination keeping their faint hopes flickering.

But he transformed the Worcester contest during a crucial 48th over.

Neal Radford was clubbed for 19 runs — 15 of them go-

ing to Akram, who pulled one huge six into the trees at midweek.

Phil Newport returned to bowl Lancashire's hero after he and Warren Hegg had put on 69 in six overs but by then the damage had been done.



AKRAM ... 67

Cool-headed tailenders Hegg and Gary Yates made sure Akram's brilliant work was not wasted, collecting the 24 runs still needed as Lancashire triumphed with four deliveries to spare.

The day had seemed certain to belong to England batsman Graeme Hick who earlier collected his third century in the competition this season.

Hick's 109 off 131 balls led Worcestershire to 261 for five from their 55 overs.

In the other rain-affected semifinal at Canterbury, Kent, bidding to reach a record seventh final, recovered to score 250 for nine against Somerset — thanks to Mark Ealham's 61-ball knock of 52.

Kent took 87 from their last 10 overs to set Somerset a daunting task when the game resumes today.

Pakistan pick '96 WC cricket venues

ISLAMABAD, June 14: The Pakistan Cricket Board has announced seven venues for the 1996 Wills World Cup cricket to be hosted by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka but has yet to finalise the schedule of match at each venue, reports PTI.

The seven venues are — Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore and Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura.

Chief executive of the cricket board Arif Ali Khan Abbasi told reporters in Karachi that the venues had been announced since they had to be sent to the World Cup Organising Committee (PILCOM) urgently but the schedule of the matches was likely to be made public within the next 24 hours.

India and Sri Lanka have already announced their World Cup venues and match schedules.

Maintaining that the venues had been announced after a consensus with the board officials including chairman Zulfikar Ali Shah and treasurer Salman Taseer, Abbasi, however, noted that the venues made known last evening for the matches could be shifted to other centres if the situation so warranted.

Hyderabad (Sindh), Multan (Punjab), Quetta (Balochistan) and Sialkot (Punjab) were having match venues of international standard but had not been included in the original list of selected centres. The final of the World Cup, scheduled to start on February 14, next year, will be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

A cockeyed patriotism!

BIRMINGHAM, England, June 14: Warwickshire batsman Roger Twose confirmed on Tuesday that he will be emigrating at the end of the season in a bid to launch a Test career with New Zealand, reports AFP.

The 27-year-old from the west of England completed a four-year Kiwi qualification in April after captaining Wellington in a number of games last winter.

Twose, who scored his 12th first-class century against Sussex on Monday, said: "I am definitely going. There is no turning back now."

"The positives outweigh the negatives and one of the main reasons is that I have a real chance to play international cricket."

Twose, who has a New Zealand girlfriend and a home in Wellington, would be eligible for a Test series in India beginning in October.

He has regularly appeared in New Zealand domestic competitions, playing for Northern Districts and Central Districts before joining Wellington last year.

IOC rallies behind Sydney

BUDAPEST, June 14: Sydney Games organisers were given the full backing of the International Olympic Committee here on Wednesday after reporting on fears over a 440 million-dollar (600 million Australian) shortfall in private funding, reports AFP.

"As with every Games there are always problems but we are entirely confident all issues will be resolved," IOC director general Francois Carrard said. "We are still at a very early stage."

He denied the IOC had ever considered withdrawing the Games from Sydney. "This is absolutely, categorically wrong," he added.

Gary Pemberton, executive president of the Sydney Organising Committee for the 2000 Games, had assured the IOC that both the New South Wales state government and opposition were fully behind the Games.

"I have undertakings from both sides of Parliament that the government and opposition will work towards giving bi-partisan support to the Games," he added.

IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch "made a point to reinforce that view," he said.

The comments were echoed by IOC director gen-

eral Francois Carrard, who said reports that the Games could be moved out of Sydney were "absolutely, categorically untrue."

Time, the traitor

LONDON, June 14: Margaret Thatcher's husband Denis, whose love of golf was as legendary as his role as gentlemanly escort to the former prime minister, has hung up his clubs because of arthritis, his office said today, reports Reuter.

Thatcher, now 80, had been looking forward to a quiet golfing retirement before his wife decided to fight to become leader of the Conservative Party in 1975.

The rest is history and golf took a back seat until his wife was forced out of office in 1990 after 11 years as premier.

"I haven't played for several months. It's arthritis — old age," he told The Times. "I've had physiotherapy but it doesn't work. Now I'm trying a bloody witch-doctor."

Golf may have gone, but there are some pleasures left. "My idea of heaven," he once said, "is sitting in my garden on a warm June night with a bottle of bubbly (champagne), and my wife in a reasonably calm frame of mind."

"The IOC is confident that all issues, including those of financing, will be resolved," he said.

"We were extremely pleased with Sydney's report," Carrard added. "The degree of preparation and work is indeed very impressive."

John Coates, the Australian Olympic Committee president, described the problem as a difference of interpretation over the Olympic Village accounts.

NSW Olympics Minister Michael Knight had warned to taxpayers they might have to pay 600 million Australian dollars if all the village apartments could not be let immediately after the Games.

Coates told the IOC executive board that a regional branch of the international court of arbitration would be set up at Sydney.

The IOC will agree at this week's session to ask all competitors at next year's Games in Atlanta to waive their rights to go to court over a drugs case before exhausting the appeals procedures.

Disputes will have first to be heard by the respective international federation, IOC and then the court of arbitration.

"That should keep us out of the American courts," Coates said.

Troubled time for Tyson

NEW YORK, June 14: Plans for former heavy-weight champion Mike Tyson's Harlem homecoming likely will be scaled back after strong criticism by community activists opposed to celebrating the return of a convicted rapist.

Tyson, released from prison last March after serving three years for raping a beauty pageant contestant, will attend a rally, visit a local restaurant and announce a charitable donation next Tuesday — all part of his "self-improvement project," said activists the Reverend Al Sharpton, announcing "emphatically and unequivocally" that the events will go on despite the criticism, reports Reuter.

But the critics — local activists and newspaper columnists — have forced organisers to scale back the original plans for Tyson's appearance.

Plans for a parade, street festival and musical entertainment have been scrapped, and a number of local politicians and ministers on Tyson's so-called welcoming committee would not return calls for comment Tuesday.

Among the critics of Tyson's appearance is Jill Nelson, of African-Americans against Violence, who said on Tuesday that spending "time and energy on a man convicted of rape with a long history of abusive treatment of women is an insult to those of us struggling to live decent lives and transform our community."

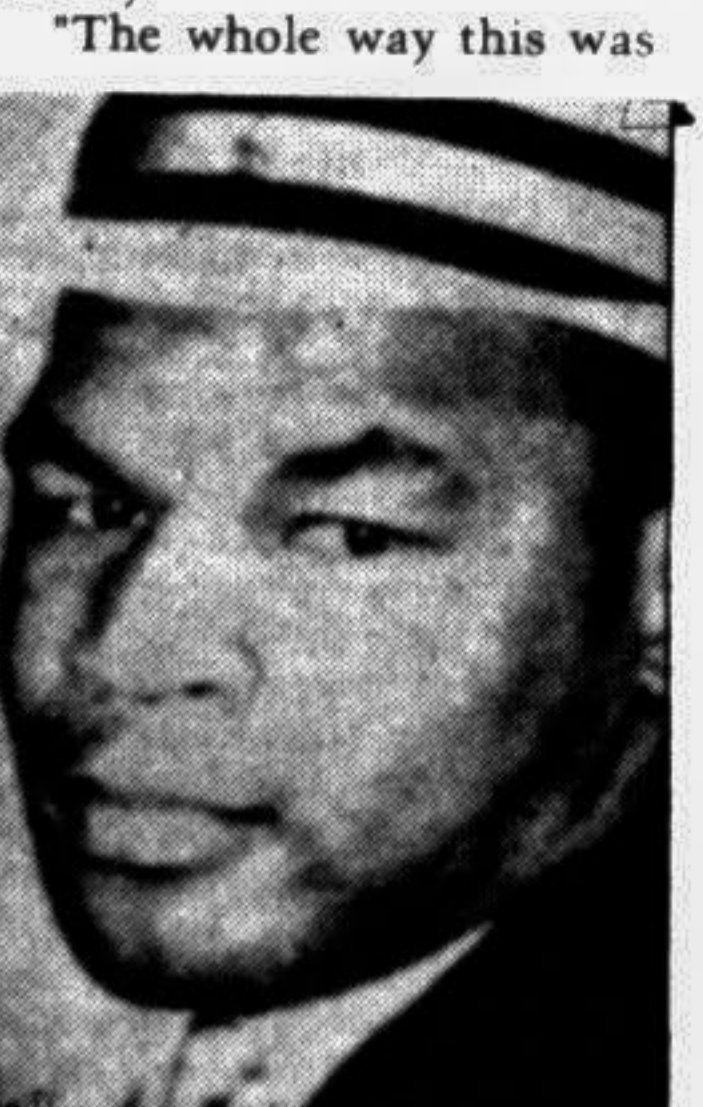
"The whole way this was

While Sharpton was insisting the show must go on, many high-profile black leaders initially listed as members of Tyson's so-called welcoming committee were growing somewhat reticent with their support.

US representative Charles Rangel, a Democrat from New York, originally listed in the local Amsterdam News as a committee member, issued a statement saying he had been mistakenly reported in favour of a celebration.

"Parades and celebrations should wait until he's done the things he needs to do to improve his reputation," Rangel said.

Sharpton insisted there had never been plans for a parade or "gala event."



MIKE TYSON

Kingdom fires first salvo at Jackson

SACRAMENTO, California, June 14: Two-time Olympic champion Roger Kingdom reved up his rivalry with Colin Jackson on Tuesday, saying he'll regain his world 110-metre hurdles record from the Briton and win the 1996 Olympics, reports Reuter.

"Nobody has challenged Colin Jackson since I left," said Kingdom, who until this year had not been at top form since knee surgery in 1991.

"My goal is to take him down," Kingdom, the 1984 and '88 Olympic champion, told reporters on the eve of the US championships. "And I will guarantee you before it is all over, I will take him down."

Kingdom, who lost his world record to Jackson in 1993, also predicted he would deny Jackson the Olympic gold next year.

"I refuse to let him come to Atlanta in my home state and beat me," Kingdom said. "That won't happen."

MLS: Americans' white hope

NEW YORK, June 13 (AFP): One year after hosting the World Cup, the United States still have no premier league and football remains a poor stepchild to basketball and baseball.

Brazil's shootout triumph over Italy capped a stunning 24-team showcase of the world's finest talent.

"Not only was it successful, but it was the greatest World Cup of all time anywhere," World Cup organising chairman Alan Rothenberg said.

But any momentum for starting a new US league has died in the past 12 months, with football vanishing from television screens and newspapers.

"It seems like soccer has disappeared again," lamented US player Tab Ramos.

Rothenberg vows his fledgling 10-team Major League Soccer (MLS) will debut in nine months at a par with some of the world's top leagues.

"From the beginning, we will be a credible Division One," Rothenberg said. "Maybe we won't be the Italian League, the German Bundesliga or the English and Spanish Leagues. After those top leagues, we will be credible with the other countries."

MLS was to open last April, but a lack of financial support from US companies forced a delay. The wait cost MLS a chance to benefit from fan rebellion after baseball's labour fight.

Baseball crowds and viewership are off by 27 per cent.

But Rothenberg refuses to see the delay as an opportunity lost.

"It would've been folly to rush in a start before we were ready," he said. "We're trying to build a league with permanence. We would have done a lot more things wrong had we hurried."

"We weren't looking for disgruntled baseball fans to run across the street and become soccer fans. We were looking long-term. We want the millions of soccer fans in the United States to come and the more general sports fan will follow."

That will take money. A loan from the World Cup profits provided seed money for FIFA's legacy league. But MLS investors must repay that money and finance the transfer fees needed to provide top talent.

"We're where we want to be," Rothenberg said. "We have commitments for 75 million dollars to fund the league through the early days. We have made good business deals. Signings are not going to be budget breakers."

Players will be owned by MLS and assigned to teams, with Ramos in New Jersey and Los Angeles having Mexico World Cup goalkeeper Jorge Campos, the only non-US player signed so far.

"There are no recruiting barriers," Rothenberg said. "We're not going to limit ourselves to any areas. We're not going to compete for everyone in Europe. But there is a huge market out there. I'm sure we will have top international players from around the world playing in MLS."

MLS will scour the world for coaches and managers as well. But those who accept the jobs will not have total roster control. Some clubs will be league run and some will be guided by investors.

Rothenberg wants coaches who play an "attractive" brand of football for goal-hungry US audiences. And pity the director of operations for a woeful club operating with league funding only.

"We will have some top notch general managers whose necks will be in the noose," Rothenberg said. "If they don't do well, we will pull the chair out from under them and hang them."

Each club has a salary cap of 1.13 million dollars, so expect a handful of well-paid stars and many lesser paid fill-ins from the US ranks. And no British hooligans or Cantona kicks, please. This is family entertainment.

"Last year's World Cup turned us on to soccer, which we hadn't been exposed to before. We think MLS is perfect for family entertainment," said Jonathan Kraft, whose family owns the Boston MLS Club and an American football team.

MLS was forced into larger stadiums to find proper facilities in their markets, which include World Cup sites Dallas, Tampa, Washington, Boston, Los Angeles, New Jersey and San Jose plus Denver, Kansas City and Columbus, Ohio.

Organisers would be happy with 10,000 fans a game and growing interest. And they remind doubters of record World Cup attendances.

FIH's nod to Adelaide

BRUSSELS, June 14: Australia will host the International Hockey Federation's (FIH) Champions' Trophy tournament for the third time in 1997, officials said here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The FIH awarded the 19th championship to Adelaide. The men's tournament, with the top six nations, will be played in the Pines Stadium from October 9 to 19. The venue was chosen ahead of European cities Berlin and Brussels.

Australia hosted the tournament in Perth in 1985 and Melbourne in 1990.

Sharpton dismissed the criticism of Tyson's appearance as coming from "the white media" and "some self-righteous people."

"Harlem is a community of broken dreams and second chances," Sharpton said, calling Tyson "a young man asking for and beginning a road to recovery."

ESPN's dream comes true

SINGAPORE, June 14: US-based cable sports network ESPN said today it plans to tackle more Asian markets with customised programming in native languages, reports Reuter.

The company launched a programming and production centre in Singapore today to produce three separate language and programming feeds for India, Greater China and Southeast Asia.

Budget details were not disclosed.

The new services will carry ESPN material from the United States as well as regional and international events relevant to each region, ESPN said in a written release.

Subscribers in Taiwan will be able to watch live American baseball with Mandarin Commentary, while Indian viewers can eventually watch local cricket action in Hindi.

ESPN currently provides Cantonese, Mandarin and English commentary, with Hindi and Bahasa Indonesia to be added later.

"This is an important landmark in the history of ESPN in Asia and a dream come true for the region's sports fans who will be able to watch their favourite sports, live, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," ESPN Asia Ltd vice president Harold Anderson said.

The 16-year-old ESPN is now beamed into 120 countries, including 15 in the Asia-Pacific region.