



British Prime Minister John Major (R) receives a cricket bat as being presented by Sir Basil Feldman, chairman of the National Union at Tory Party headquarters in London on Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

London in festive mood

Tawfiq Aziz Khan from Wimbledon



LONDON, June 25: The pilgrimage begins on Monday on the immaculate lawns of the historic Centre Court at Wimbledon.

The congregation has assembled from all over the world — one hundred and twenty-eight men and an equal number of women — all of them are the best in the game of tennis today. They will be led in their quest for the ultimate in tennis by de-

fending men's singles champion Pete Sampras of the United States, vying for his consecutive title. He will open the proceedings as is the tradition against a lesser known German named Karsten Braasch. Exactly at 2 pm, Wimbledon comes to life on the last Monday of June this year.

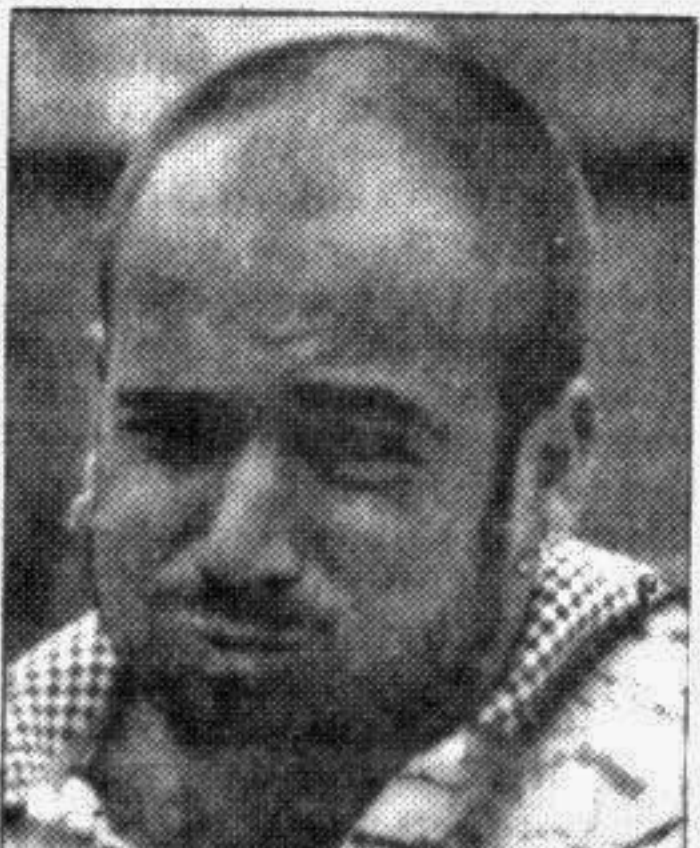
The majestic setting of the All-England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club gives an impression of sombre gaiety and of course, high tradition which has always been British. The edifice has been painted dark green and the decor of the entire place speaks very high of the taste and sophistication of the people who have been putting in their best to make this one as memorable as the previous one, if not more.

But there have been some disheartening news already. Both Sergei Bruguera, seeded number 8, and Alberto Berasategui have withdrawn and they will undergo medical examination for the injuries for which they have withdrawn.

Jaime Yzaga of Peru has also withdrawn out till Satur-

day evening there was no confirmation from him.

The mood around Wimbledon is one of revered festival. Souvenir shops — official and private — have opened their doors along Church Road. And those who have not been able to get a ticket have already taken their provisions along the pavement in makeshift canopies in a spirit of 'Come what may'. The count-down to the championships '95 has begun and the zero hour is approaching very fast.



ANDRE AGASSI

Frana freaks out Woodbridge

NOTTINGHAM, England, June 25: Tie-break master Javier Frana upset Australian seventh seed Todd Woodbridge to win the Nottingham Open on Saturday, the 28-year-old from Argentina taking a surprisingly one-sided final 7-6, 6-3, reports Reuter.

Frana, out of the game for four months last year through serious illness, completed a fairy-tale return to earn his first ATP title in his third final in two months.

The unseeded left-hander dominated from start to finish although he still needed the familiar tie-break route to capture the first set — his fifth such success of the tournament.

A single break of serve in the second set when Frana played a trio of quite magnificent points, two startling retrievers to the Woodbridge backhand and a superb pass down the line, to lead 4-2 was enough to clinch matters.

Wimbledon doubles champion Woodbridge finally handed him the breakthrough with his 35th double-fault of the championship and Frana went on to serve out in typically steady fashion for the match in 81 minutes.

Muster moves into final

ST POELTEN, Austria, June 25: French Open champion Thomas Muster defeated Italian Stefano Pescosolido 6-0, 3-6, 6-4 on Saturday, his 39th straight clay-court victory and his ticket to the final of the \$1.375 million International OTV Raffeisen Grand Prix, reports AP.

It was a tense match for Muster, who has won six titles this year. After losing the second set, he watched his unseeded opponent aggressively build a 3-1 lead in the third.

But the 27-year-old Austrian roared back, winning it in an hour and 58 minutes.

"Pescosolido has the potential to be in the top 30," Muster said. "He made things very difficult for me."

In the Sunday final, Muster plays Bohdan Ulihrach, who defeated fellow Czech Slava Dosedel 7-5, 6-0.

Stich in Halle Open final

HALLE, Germany, June 25: Third seed Michael Stich beat unseeded Dutchman Paul Haarhuis 7-6, (7-4) and 6-1 in the semifinals of the Halle Open grass court event on Saturday, reports Reuter. The former Wimbledon champion will defend his title today against fourth seed Marc Rosset of Switzerland, who also beat a Dutchman, Jacco Eltingh, 7-6, (7-4) and 7-5.

"I have not yet won twice in the same place and that is why I am a little superstitious," the German said.

"After the tie-break everything went well for me. Above all my good second serve was decisive."

Japanese spikers on target

FUKUOKA, Japan, June 25: Japan lived up to their pre-tournament promise by beating Thailand in three sets to retain the Asia Pacific Cup men's volleyball title today, reports AP.

The Japanese spikers, who will represent the country at the Student Games in August here, coasted to a 3-0, (15-9, 15-9, and 15-7) victory to wind up the five-day contest at the Fukuoka gymnasium in western Japan.

Japan collected five straight wins without losing a single set. Thailand was second with four wins and one defeat.

Bata schools h'ball results

Sports Reporter

Ansar VDP High School and Shahid Nobi High School have won their respective matches in the 6th Bata Schools handball tournament at the handball court adjacent to the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

In the day's first match, Ansars recorded a comfortable 20-9 win over West End High School with Shafiqul Islam scoring highest five goals for the winners. Mahmudunnabi and Nahid Hasan, with four goals each, were the other notable scorers of the Ansars.

While Rezaul Karim and Tofazzal netted four and two goals respectively for the losers.

Meanwhile, in the day's second match, Shahid Nobi trounced Rajdhani High School with 38-8.

The winners led the first half 16-2. Pritosh, who played the sheet anchor role for his side's victory, scored the highest thirteen goals.

Wimbledon begins today

Fans for a dream final



LONDON, June 25: It may be two weeks away, but Wimbledon fans are already looking to an Andre Agassi-Pete Sampras final to obliterate the bad memory of last year's title bout and restore lustre to the men's game, reports Reuter.

When Sampras and Goran Ivanisevic engaged in what many saw as the ultimate in boring "thud and blunder" serve-volley tennis a year ago, the obituaries on Wimbledon's revered grass surfaces were written far and wide.

While Wimbledon officials insisted that reports of the impending death of the green stuff were premature, another fortnight of aces and three-stroke rallies when this year's event begins on Monday might well set the bells tolling for the grass.

Attempts to counter the power games by using "slower" balls appear to have had little effect, as Sampras acknowledged on his way to the Queen's Club title a week ago.

"I hardly noticed the dif-

ference," said the American. "When I play Goran on grass, it's two of the biggest servers in the game. It's going to be quick and you're not going to get rallies no matter what balls we use. We're always going to go for aces."

"But if I play Andre or Michael Chang, we'll have rallies because they like to stay back and that's fine with me," he said.

Agassi is top seed and Sampras second in accordance with their rankings. "I hope we both make it because it would be a dream final," added Sampras.

"I remember the great Borg-McEnroe match in 1980 may be we could produce something like that."

"We have fought each other for the number one spot all year. I had it and now he has it. That's good for tennis and a final between us would be good for it too," added Sampras.

"We have totally different styles. May be my serve is better, but Andre has the best return in the game."

Sampras opens his defence on Monday against Karsten

Braasch, a German ranked 119th in the world. Agassi sets out on Tuesday against Australian qualifier Andrew Painter, who is on his first visit to Britain.

Sampras has some dangerous seeds in his half of the draw such as Todd Martin. But he is not quite the player who battled to last year's semifinals before losing to the champion.

Then there is the prospect of a clash with Ivanisevic in the semifinal.

But Agassi could have a more testing path, with accomplished volleyers like fellow-Americans Patrick McEnroe and David Wheaton as well as former champions Michael Stich and Boris Becker of Germany likely to be blocking his progress.

Injuries could play a vital role. Agassi, the 1992 winner, hurt a hip flex or muscle as he lost out in the recent French Open final but appears to have recovered.

Sampras is fit, but Becker is struggling with a calf injury that has seen him shuttling between England and Germany for treatment over the past week.

Injuries could also play a part in the women's event, particularly if Steffi Graf does not get over her recent wrist and back problems.

The wrist is the major concern, but the 26-year-old five-times champion dispelled most of the doubts by engaging in three full practice sessions on Saturday.

Graf, beaten in the opening round by American Lori McNeil last year, is the top seed ahead of Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario and defending champion Conchita Martinez, who could meet in an all-Spanish semifinal.

Graf might have to contend again in the semifinals with Czech Jana Novotna, who should have beaten her in the 1993 final.

But a Graf-Martinez clash is the most likely final, the holder having adapted better to the demands of grass than her compatriot Sanchez-Vicario.

TODAY'S MATCH SCHEDULE

Order of play on the show courts on the first day of Wimbledon on Monday (prefix number denotes seed):

Centre Court (1300 GMT start):

Karsten Braasch (Germany) v 2-Pete Sampras (US). Mark Petchey (Britain) v Mats Wilander (Sweden). 8-Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina) v Lea Ghirardi (France).

Court One (1300):

Sebastien Lareau (Can) v 4-Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia). Sabine Appelmans (Belgium) v 6-Mikiko Date (Japan). Lionel Roux (France) v 5-Michael Chang (US).

Court Two (1100):

Tim Henman (Britain) v Paul Wekesa (Kenya). Stephanie Rottier (Netherlands) v 12-Amy Frazier (US). Daniel Vacek (Czech Republic) v 7-Wayne Ferreira (South Africa). 16-Helena Sukova (Czech Republic) v Sandra Cecchini (Italy).

Court 14 (1100):

Radka Bobkova (Czech Republic) v 15-Brenda Schultz-McCarthy (Netherlands). 16-Guy Forget (France) v Gary Henderson (Britain). Derrick Rostagno (US) v Jeremy Bates (Britain). Amanda Wainwright (Britain) v Zina Garrison-Jackson (US).

Edwards upstages Christie



VILLENEUVE D'ASCO, France, June 25: Jonathan Edwards upstaged British teammate Linford Christie Sunday by recording the best-ever triple jump under any conditions while Christie gained his third sprint victory of the meet, reports AP.

Germany captured the men's team competition while Russia took the women's division. Edwards, a bronze medalist at the 1993 World Championships, went 18.43 metres (60 feet 5 3/4 inches) with a wind just above the legal limit of 2.0 metres per second at 2.4 mps.

It was the best ever triple jump under any conditions, surpassing Willie Banks' 18.20 metres (59.8 1/2) with a wind of 5.2 mps in 1988.

"It's really hard to put into words that kind of performance," Edwards said. "But I'm disappointed. Without the wind I thought I could have broken the world record."

Banks holds the legal world record of 17.97 metres (59.11 1/2).

The 29-year-old Edwards later came back to jump a legal 17.72 metres (58.1 3/4) to better his own British record. He also jumped 18.39 (60.4) with a wind of 3.7 mps and stopped after four attempts of his allowed six.

Christie won the 200 in 20.11, just outside his personal best of 20.09 done at the 1988 Olympic Games.

"I'm very surprised to have won and very surprised with the time," Christie said. "That's what I like about this kind of weekend — you're boosted up by the others' performances."

Christie now has won six 100s and three 200s in European Cup competition.

He sent word to the team's hotel late Friday night that he

would run and arrived by train Saturday morning. He had been a questionable starter throughout the week after the death of his mother whose funeral was Thursday.

Saturday, competing with a sore throat, won the 100 in 10.05 seconds, assisted by a legal wind of 2.0 metres per second. The time is the second-best 100 time of the year and reassures Christie who had been off-form in the early season, losing four of his first five races.

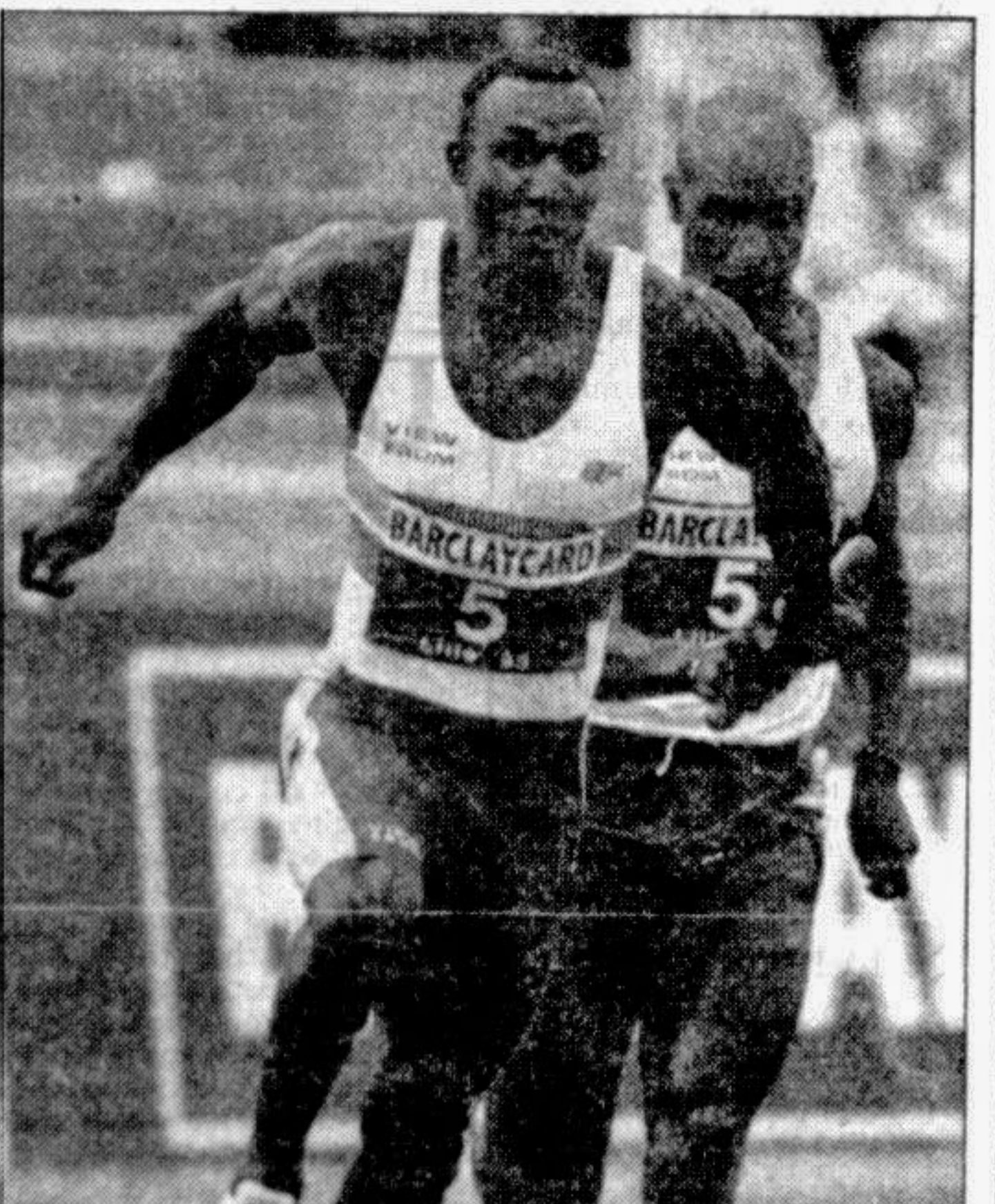
He also anchored the 4 by 100 relay to a time of 38.73

the third best time of the year.

Germany's Heike Drechsler, world and Olympic champion in the long jump, took her event with a wind-aided 7.04 metres for the top women's performance of the day.

Germany won the men's standings with 117 points with Britain at 107. With the women, Russia had 117 points to Germany's 100.

Last year, Germany gained a double victory in the team standings, its first major success after unification.



Britain's Olympic and world champion Linford Christie (L) takes the stick from teammate Darren Braithwaite in the 4x100m relay of the European Cup athletics meet at the Villeneuve d'Ascq Stadium in France on Saturday. The British team won the race. — AFP/UNB photo

Jones Jr pounds Pazienza



ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey, June 25: In a spectacular showcase of his dazzling punching speed and power, Roy Jones Jr knocked out Vinny Pazienza in the sixth round on Saturday night to retain his International Boxing Federation super middleweight title, reports Reuter.

"Vinny gave a great effort and is a heck of a challenger but sometimes talent is a little too quick," said Jones.

After being overwhelmed

by Jones' accurate, lightning-fast punches and being knocked out for the first time in 46 fights, Pazienza offered the 26-year-old champion the highest compliment.

Jones bloodied Pazienza's face in the third and fourth rounds, then floored him twice in the sixth round with left hooks. Jones thought that was enough to win.

"I really wanted the referee to stop the fight, but if I see an opportunity to get it over I have to get it over, that's my job," Jones said.

He finished off the game challenger with a right upper-

cut and then a left hook that put Pazienza on his back, with his head on the bottom rope.

Referee Steve Smoger didn't even bother to count Pazienza out, instead immediately signalling an end to the carnage at 2:58 of the round.

"I didn't want the fight to be stopped. I would have gone on," said Pazienza, 40-6.

Though Pazienza finished the fight flat on his back, the former two-time world champion refused to say his improbable comeback from a broken neck was finished.

Graf in good shape

LONDON, June 25: World number one Steffi Graf, who has been receiving treatment for a wrist injury, dispelled any doubts about her fitness to bid for a sixth Wimbledon singles crown on Sunday, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old top-seed, who won the French Open two weeks ago, completed a series of full practice session and declared she would be able to playing the championships which start on Monday.

"I hurt it hitting a serve and I went back to Germany for treatment," said Graf, adding: "Obviously it's much better since I played a full practice. Now I'm just icing it."

Graf opens her 1995 campaign against Switzerland's 14-year-old Martina Hingis on Tuesday.

Martina's choice Becker

LONDON, June 25: Martina Navratilova backed Boris Becker to win Wimbledon for a fourth time here on Saturday, reports AFP.

The nine-time Wimbledon champion, who retired from singles play after reaching the final last year, said: "I know Boris would dearly like to win here again — and I think he could."

"I'd certainly like to see him win. I like his approach to life. He's a gentle human being."

Navratilova made Becker her personal favourite although the big-serving 27-year-old German has not won a Grand Slam tournament in four years.

He is also fighting a race against time to be fit for the championships which start on Monday.

Becker, who arrived in London from Germany on Friday after a week of intensive treatment for a calf strain, won the singles title here in 1985, 1986 and 1989.

Becker, a semi-finalist in 1993 and 1994, is third favourite for this year's championship behind defending champion Pete Sampras and world number-one Andre Agassi.

Navratilova, 38, will be playing at this year's championships in the doubles only — lining up alongside Steffi Graf.

"We'll be taking it very seriously," said Navratilova, who needs two more titles to equal Billie Jean King's Wimbledon record of 20.

"It will be fun to be on the same side. When the ball comes over the net I know I can rely on Steffi to get there."

Big Ben on track

COLLEFERRO, Italy, June 25: Ben Johnson, the Canadian sprinter banned for life after testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs, made a 100-metre dash Saturday to raise funds for a drug rehabilitation community, reports AP.

Johnson was supposed to run against Austrian sprinter Andreas Berger, who himself was suspended for testing positive for steroids in 1993. But Berger didn't show up. Neither did many fans for the fund-raiser at the track in Colleferro, a suburb southeast of Rome.

Organisers said Berger had pulled a muscle.

Johnson did the run in 10.2 seconds, slower than times clocked recently by runners in official competitions. Leroy Burrell of the United States did 100 metres in 9.85 seconds last year.

Johnson was stripped of his gold medal won at the 1988 Seoul Olympics when he tested positive. He was banned for life in 1993 after failing a drug test for a second time.

Tszyu retains title

NEWCASTLE, Australia, June 25: Kostya Tszyu successfully defended his International Boxing Federation junior welterweight title Sunday with a unanimous points decision over American Roger Mayweather, reports AP.

The Russian-born Tszyu, 25, of Sydney, was making the first defence of the title he won from the Puerto Rican-born, American-based Jake Rodriguez in Las Vegas in January.

Tszyu, now 15-0 with 11 knock-outs, became an Australian citizen on May 19. The judges scored the fight 119-109, 118-110 and 118-100 in favour of Tszyu in the 12-rounder at the Newcastle Entertainment Center.

Mayweather formerly held the World Boxing Association super featherweight and World Boxing Council light welterweight titles and was also the light welterweight and welterweight champions of the International Boxing Organization.



Action from yesterday's sixth Bata schools handball match between Ansar VDP High and West End High at the handball court adjacent to the Dhaka Stadium. Ansars beat West End by 20-9 goals. — Star photo