

Johnson juggernaut proving unstoppable

GOTHENBURG, Aug 11: American Michael Johnson took a giant step towards a unique golden double on Wednesday when he retained his world 400 metres title with a dazzling burst of finishing speed as he set the second fastest one-lap time ever, reports Reuter.

The 27-year-old from Dallas clocked 43.39 seconds, leaving American world record holder Butch Reynolds six metres adrift in second place in 44.22 seconds.

Johnson's storming victory was the highlight of a day's athletics which saw Hassiba Boulmerka claim the women's 1,500 metres title for Algeria and Portugal's Fernanda Ribeiro capture the women's 10,000 metres gold medal.

The only slight disappointment for Johnson, one of the most awesome athletes on the planet, came when he realised he had failed to break Reynolds' seven-year-old world record of 43.29 seconds by just a one-tenth of a second.

"I looked at the clock and I was a little disappointed at first to go so close to the world record and not break it," he said. "But that performance has filled me with confidence. I think I can break it later in the season."

"But there's no time to



MICHAEL JOHNSON

celebrate. I'm going to have a massage, something to eat and go to bed because I have to run the first round of the

disappeared the instant he caught Reynolds with 175 metres to go.

"I saw him go past me and I just didn't have the speed or strength to catch him," admitted Reynolds, who repeated his silver from the 1993 World Championships in Stuttgart.

For Johnson, it was his fourth world gold medal and his 46th straight victory over 400 metres.

Greg Haughton, a 21-year-old from Jamaica, who won the American collegiate title two months ago, was third in 44.56 and seemed awestruck at the news conference afterwards.

"I am so happy with a personal best and a bronze medal and to be sitting next to the two best ever to have walked the earth at this distance," he said. This is their time and I hope I can match them in the future."

While Johnson lived up to all the pre-race hype to win his crown, Ribeiro repaid the quiet confidence instilled by her supporters when she captured Portugal's second gold medal of the championships, winning the 10,000 metres title in 31 minutes 49.92 seconds.

Ribeiro, who set a world 5,000 metres record last month in the Netherlands, never allowed Olympic champion Derartu Tulu to dictate the pace.

Agassi, Sampras in qtrs



MASON, Ohio, Aug 11: Top seed Andre Agassi and second seed Pete Sampras both needed three sets on Thursday to move into the quarter finals of the 1.8 million dollars ATP Championship but their matches were quite different, reports Reuter.

The top-ranked Agassi played a bizarre match that seesawed dramatically before he finished with a 6-0, 0-6, 6-2 third round victory over 16th-seeded Alberto Berasategui of Spain.

Sampras barely withstood a long, close battle with fellow American and 15th-seeded Todd Martin for a 6-7 (2-7), 6-4, 7-6 (7-4) win.

In today's quarter-finals, Agassi faces unseeded Renzo Furlan of Italy and Sampras plays eighth-seeded Michael Stich of Germany.

In other pairings, fourth-seeded and two-time defending champion Michael Chang faces 11th seed Jim Courier and sixth seed Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia plays

13th-seeded Thomas Enqvist of Sweden.

Agassi started off so strong, taking the first set in 24 minutes, that is appeared the 18th-ranked Berasategui, known for his clay court prowess, might never get on the scoreboard. But then a strange thing happened.

Agassi couldn't hold his serve in the first game of the second set, double-faulting the final point away.

Berasategui started the next game with new balls which were lighter and faster. The new-ball advantage quickly gave the Spaniard a 2-0 advantage and in 18-minutes a 6-0 second set win.

At 5-0 I wasn't interested in coming back in that set," Agassi said after the one hour, nine minute match. "I just tried to get my mind back where it needed to be. I was thinking I've got problems on my hands."

Agassi, who now has a 2-0 winning record against Berasategui, regrouped, breaking serve in the fourth and eighth games in the final

set.

"The way the second set went I had to convince him I was going to win the match," Agassi said.

"On hardcourts if I'm playing my game, I knew ultimately I would be a little too much for him," Agassi said.

The second-ranked Sampras needed two hours, 37 minutes to dismiss the 17th-ranked Martin, whom he had beaten in five of their seven previous matches.

In a contest between two serve-and-volleyers, Sampras served 22 aces and Martin 19.

Martin had 10 service break opportunities in the match, with eight of them coming in the critical third set. Sampras managed to escape four break points in the second game and four in the sixth game of the final set.

Sampras double-faulted to give Martin a 4-2 lead in the third-set tiebreaker, but two points later Martin smacked a backhand long to even the score at 4-4. Sampras won the next three points for the match.

"He ran through the security gate and tried to grab my camera," said Meier, who also works as a part-time paramedic with an ambulance crew.

"He's a head higher than I am, he grabbed me, he tried to frighten me but the security men came forward and helped. All three pulled him off."

"I got the camera back and the security men said run and I got away. I didn't understand what he was saying but he sounded furious.

"It was not pretty. I thought most sportsmen were meant to set an example."

Christie had been in Switzerland receiving treatment for the hamstring injury that contributed to his defeat as he was defending his world 100 metres crown last Sunday.

Christie, who was speaking to the British media for the first time in several weeks when he arrived back in Sweden, said his injury was a lot worse than was first thought.

"There's a tear in the hamstring and to be honest with you I'm not running any more this week."

Privalova sidelined

GOTHENBURG, Aug 11: World 100 and 200 metres medalist Irina Privalova has been forced to pull out of the Russian women's 4X100 metres relay squad at the World Championship because of a leg muscle injury, reports Reuter.

The double European champion said today that she had strained a leg muscle in Thursday's 200 metres final where she won the silver medal. Privalova said she was also likely to miss next week's Golden Four meeting in Zurich, the richest event on the circuit.

"In the second part of the 200 metres I felt something wrong with my leg," Privalova said. "I finished the race but now, of course, it will be 'no' to a start in the relay and 'no' to Zurich."

Privalova said she would travel to Switzerland ahead of Wednesday's meeting to see a specialist since the Zurich organisers were keen for her to run.

But the Russian hopes to be fit enough to run at the end of the season at the final Golden Four meetings in Brussels and Berlin.

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Ribeiro, who set a world 5,000 metres record last month in the Netherlands, never allowed Olympic champion Derartu Tulu to dictate the pace.

Asked about the incident before his flight from Switzerland to Gothenburg, Christie said: "That doesn't ring any bells with me, not at all. You know about Chinese whispers, the more they go around, the longer they get."

Christie's agent Sue Barrett, who travelled on the flight with him from Zurich interrupted: "I was there, I didn't see anything."

Christie added: "Would I do that? Would I abuse anybody?"

But Reuters photographer Rene Meier said he was chased and grabbed by Christie after taking his picture at the airport.

Watched by astonished passengers, Christie tried to grab the photographer's camera but was restrained by three airport security guards.

The athlete stormed away through the airport departure lounge to take his flight to Sweden minutes before it was due to leave.

"He ran through the security gate and tried to grab my camera," said Meier, who also works as a part-time paramedic with an ambulance crew.

"He's a head higher than I am, he grabbed me, he tried to frighten me but the security men came forward and helped. All three pulled him off."

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Ana Quirot rehabilitated

GOTHENBURG, Aug 11: Cuban runner Ana Fidelia Quirot has finally put behind her the horrors of a 1993 domestic fire which scorched her face, neck and abdomen, stopping her career in its tracks and almost ending her life, reports Reuter.

"It was great feeling to run here," the 32-year-old Quirot said after winning her opening-round race in the women's 800 metres at the World Championships on Thursday.

"I am happy and proud at the same time that I could participate in such a championship after such a long time."

"I think I can run the times that I ran before," said the 1992 Olympic bronze medalist.

The tragedy in her home in Havana, which led to the premature birth — and later death — of her daughter, has been forgotten, she said.

"It is in the past. I look forward now. I am the same woman as before now," she said.

Barry Dudley told Somerset skipper Andy Hayhurst to remove him immediately for the rest of the innings.

Hayhurst himself bowled the final two balls of the over.

"Lion had the last laugh as he went on to hit a century in a Kent total of 271. Pakistani leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed took five for 106 for Somerset.

Another leading Pakistan Test bowler, paceman Wasim Akram, celebrated captaining Lancashire for the first time

with six for 72 as Leicestershire were bowled out for 235.

He took over from county captain Mike Watkinson and England skipper Michael Atherton, both playing in the final Test.

Former England skipper Graham Gooch claimed the 18th first-class century of his career and his fifth of the season as he shared a sparkling 189-run second wicket partnership with Nasser Hussain for Essex against Glamorgan at Swansea.

Gooch was out for 102 and Hussain for 103 as Essex reached 330 for seven.

Derbyshire captain Kim Barnett hit 169 in six and a quarter hours against Worcester at Kidderminster, his 46th century for the county, who finished on 355 for four.

Seeds sail

SAN MARINO, Aug 11: Favourites Thomas Muster of Austria and Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi cruised into the third round of the San Marino Open clay-court tournament on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Van Troost was twice non-balled against Kent for short-pitched deliveries at Nigel Lloung having already sent one bouncer in the over.

In his next over Van Troost knocked the bat out of Graham Cowdrey's hands with a full toss and umpire

Sport



Jamaican Merlene Ottey kisses the gold medal after winning the 200 metres event at the World Athletics Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden on August 10.

— AFP/UNB photo

Ottey steals Torrence's thunder

GOTHENBURG, Aug 11: British sprinter Linford Christie denied manhandling a press photographer at Zurich Airport when he arrived back in Sweden for the World Championships after treatment to a hamstring injury, reports Reuter.

Asked about the incident before his flight from Switzerland to Gothenburg, Christie said: "That doesn't ring any bells with me, not at all. You know about Chinese whispers, the more they go around, the longer they get."

Christie's agent Sue Barrett, who travelled on the flight with him from Zurich interrupted: "I was there, I didn't see anything."

Christie added: "Would I do that? Would I abuse anybody?"

But Reuters photographer Rene Meier said he was chased and grabbed by Christie after taking his picture at the airport.

Ottey later accused Torrence, who had a commanding lead at the line, of cheating. However, the immensely popular Jamaican then tempered her allegations by saying she did not know if the move was deliberate.

"She cheated. She ran about two metres shorter than everybody else and she ran in somebody else's lane."

"I don't know if she did it on purpose, but sometimes an athlete wants to run as short as possible and runs too close to the kerb. I heard she did it in the semifinals and it was very close, but I wasn't looking."

Describing the race, Ottey said: "I thought I would catch her earlier, but she was running on the line or cheating so I spent a lot of energy."

"In the last 30m, she was

so much stronger than everybody else."

Torrence also changed her tune, after initially hitting out at both the decision and the victor.

"I'm not going to worry," she said. "I know I was clearly victorious."

"I clearly beat them, I



Gwen Torrence

knew it in my heart. The person who will win now can't enjoy that."

"If I stepped out of the

lane I didn't realise it. I can't let it ruin my 100m gold medal."

The 30-year-old then promised to win in next year's Atlanta Olympics, stormed out of the stadium and returned to the Athletes Village.

But US officials later gave a statement from her husband, made before the jury's decision, which said: "If it doesn't go the way we want it to, it's okay with Gwen."

Not only did Ottey believe she deserved her victory, she also recalled the controversy which dominated the last World Championships, when she was denied the 100m gold by American Gail Devers.

Devers got the verdict at Stuttgart in 1993 after a jury considered the photo-finish, awarding victory by 1,000th of a second, but Ottey has always maintained she won.

In Gothenburg, Ottey admitted: "I thought not again, not again."

"I tried to stay calm because the United States is so strong, so powerful and things usually go their way — you know, remember Stuttgart."

"I'm very happy that it worked in my favour this time. I hope it doesn't happen a third time, because I don't know if I'll be lucky a third time."

Privalova, who said her performance had been affected by a muscle spasm after around 50m, was not in the mood to commiserate either.

Ghada Shouaa became the first Syrian ever to win a gold medal at a major international event when she took the heptathlon title, ahead of Russian Svetlana Moskaleva and Rita Iancu of Hungary.

This confirmed many experts' opinion that the 21-year-old from Syria would inherit Jackie Joyner-Kersee's domination of the event.

Valentino Kononen of Finland won the men's 50km walk, ahead of Giovanni Pericellini of Italy and Robert Korzeniowski of Poland.

MEDALS TABLE

Medals table after the sixth day of competition at the World Athletics Championships on Thursday (tabulated under gold, silver, bronze):

United States	6	1	2
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