

Glittering day in Gothenburg

The world Johnson's oyster



GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: Michael Johnson sprinted to a unique golden double...

While Johnson merely added another chapter to his growing legend, Batten made an almost legendary comeback...



Kenyan Moses Kiptanui leaps over the water jump, with his compatriot Mathew Birir in hot pursuit during the men's 3,000m steeplechase final...

ing emergency surgery on her appendix.

The 26-year-old American, her face almost masked by wrap-around sunglasses, came down the home straight matching her American teammate Tonja Buford stride for stride.

But Batten just edged ahead on the line to clock 52:61 seconds, breaking absent champion Sally Gunnells world record, set by Briton at the 1993 World Championships in Stuttgart...

Johnston said: "Story of the week; very close to the world record, anyway, I'm exhausted but I'd like to thank the organisers for allowing me to do it the way it was."

Christie sticks to his guns

GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: Britain's 100 metres champion Linford Christie confirmed on Friday he intended to retire at the end of the current season...

In an interview with Swedish television Christie said he was not going to defend his title at next year's Atlanta Olympics.

"I have made my decision and I'm sticking to it," he said. Christie, 35, finished sixth in Sunday's world 100 metres final after aggravating a hamstring injury in the semifinals.

An Iranian way of protest!

TEHRAN, Aug 12: An Iranian wrestler taking part in a World Championship has thrown away a match in order to avoid meeting an Israeli at a later stage.

"Since Iran does not recognise a country by the name of Israel... it was deemed best that he lose this easy match so that he would not later have to face (an Israeli wrestler)," the radio said.

The radio was referring to Amir Raza Khadem losing on Thursday to Turkey's Sabahettin Ozturk in the first round of the world free wrestling championship in Atalanta.

Khadem, a 1992 Barcelona Olympics bronze medalist, lost the 82-kg weight category match on warnings after 1 minute, 30 seconds, the radio said.

Iranian television said Khadem may have been barred from the championship if he had beaten Ozturk and then refused to meet the Israeli wrestler, losing his chance for a bronze medal.

It did not give the name of the Israeli wrestler. Khadem was intentionally backing off instead of actively facing Ozturk in order to lose on warnings, it said.

Muster in semis

SAN MARINO, Aug 12: Top seed Thomas Muster reached the semifinals of the San Marino Open on Friday while Spain's Alberto Costa, who beat him in Sunday's Austrian Open final, retired injured in another quarter-final, reports Reuters.

Muster, who struggled through a tie-break in his first set, beat Romanian Adrian Panaitescu 7-6, 2-6, 6-4.

Seles busy in showbiz

NEW YORK, Aug 12: Tennis star Monica Seles continued her return to public life on Friday with a playful appearance on late-night US television, admitting to nerves over next week's Canadian Open...

"I'll be very nervous," 21-year-old Seles told David Letterman during the taping of CBS' "Late Show With David Letterman."

A giggling Seles, dressed in a short black dress with a floral pattern and black slip-on shoes...



Yugoslav-born American tennis star Monica Seles appears in a CBS television talk show in New York on Aug 11. Seles is expected to return to the professional women's circuit in Canadian Open this year.

floral pattern and black slip-on shoes, was cheered by the audience of several hundred people. She said she loved the game too much to quit and hoped she would be playing until she was 35.

"Hopefully I'll be playing good and if I don't make a fool of myself, I'll be fine," she said looking forward to the Toronto tournament.

The top-ranked player in the game when she was stabbed in the back by a spectator during a match in Hamburg on April 30, 1993, will be making her long-awaited return to the women's tour in Canada next week.

Seles came out of seclusion two weeks ago to play an exhibition match against Martina Navratilova in Atlantic City, New Jersey, winning 6-3, 6-2.

On the television show, Seles laughed along with Letterman as he teased her about her short dress and the famous grunting noises she makes on court.

She said the US Open later this month will be her real comeback, a return to the Grand Slam event she won in the two years before the attack.

Seles won three Australian Opens, three French Opens and two US Opens among her 32 titles in just more than five years on the professional tour.

Fiz pockets marathon gold

GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: Martin Fiz of Spain came from behind to win the marathon at the World Championships Saturday...

Fiz caught up with Ceron some ten minutes from the finish and completed the 42.195 kilometre (26.385 miles) in 2 hours 11.41 minutes. Ceron slumped in the final two miles (three kilometres) and finished in 2:12.13 as Santos came through in 2:12.49.

Fiz is the reigning European champion and has won four of his last five races. Defending champion Mark Plaatjes failed to make the US team.

Bubka: Born to dominate

GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: Sergei Bubka strutted across the stage he was born to command on Friday, transforming again one of the most thrilling spectacles in track and field into raw theatre...

While other champions from his era have faltered or faded at the World Championships, the 31-year-old Ukrainian soared to his fifth world pole vault title in just three vaults.

He then came desperately close to his 18th outdoor world record, failing three times at 6.15 metres in front of a crowd still in a state of feverish excitement after Kim Batten's world record in the 400 metres hurdles.

Three times Bubka catapulted himself into the heavens and each time he apparently cleared the bar, only to knock it over on his way down.

He also played on the emotions of the packed crowd like a master actor, prowling across the field between attempts and waiting until the tension was at its highest before launching himself on his approach run.

As a 19-year-old kid from the Soviet Union, Bubka vaulted from obscurity to win gold at the inaugural 1983 Helsinki World Championships. He won in Rome in 1987, in Tokyo in 1991, again in Stuttgart two years ago and finally in Gothenburg on Friday.

Pouring himself a beer from one sponsor into a plastic cup carrying the insignia of a soft drink manufacturer, Bubka said it had been important to win a fifth championship.

"But to be world champion and break the world record," he shrugged. "It's a bit difficult."

Bubka, the first man to break the six metres barrier, appeared restless and showed outright impatience when asked about his world record plans.

"You think it's very easy," he said. "I fight with my body and my mind, it's not easy."

Kiptanui knows no bounds

GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: His third world title secured in comfortable fashion, Kenyan 3,000 metres steeplechaser Moses Kiptanui has another barrier in mind, reports Reuters.

"I want to run below eight minutes," said the world record holder, looking ahead to Wednesday's Grand Prix meeting in Zurich.

"I got what I wanted for this year," he said on Friday, a gold medal dangling from his neck, his third in consecutive World Championships. "The only thing left is the record."

He fell more than two seconds behind his 1992 world mark of eight minutes 2.8 seconds in claiming the world title in 8:04.16, the third fastest time ever.

But the speed necessary for a record run appeared there as he had no problem in outracing countryman Christopher Koskel, who insists on running barefooted.

"In the last 400 metres I saw nobody was with me so I decided to relax," said Kiptanui.

Koskel claimed the silver in 8:09.30 with Saad Shaddad Al-Asmari of Saudi Arabia an unexpected third in 8:12.95 after Kenyan Mathew Birir fell in the final lap to place ninth.

Kiptanui won a 35,000-dollar Mercedes car for the victory and Al-Asmari said he had been promised the same for winning Saudi Arabia's first medal in the championships.

Kiptanui will probably be even richer after Zurich if he accomplishes what he said he would do.

Although I am the world record holder, it is not enough," he remarked. "I want to do something that will be remembered as long as people remember sport."

Dream turns into reality!



GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: A timely dip turned Kim Batten's late-night dream into an afternoon surprise on Friday as the American claimed the women's 400 metres hurdles world record at the World...

she did not lean as efficiently at the finish as the more experienced Batten. "But I felt I did everything I could," said Buford.

Batten had woken up on Friday, afraid that a dream she had had would affect her race.

"I don't remember the only thing missing was a little dance Batten had planned to perform after the race. "I didn't have the courage to do it," she said.

Now it will be on to the Zurich Grand Prix on Wednesday and a meeting with France's Marie-Jose Perec, the world 400 metres...



Kim Batten (R) of the USA after winning the women's 400-metre hurdles having a lap of honour with compatriot Tonja Buford, who took the silver, in Gothenburg on Aug 11.

Batten set a new world record clocking 52.61 sec.

Atletics Championships, reports Reuters.

Batten, who 10 weeks ago was struggling to run at all because of an emergency appendectomy, beat compatriot Tonja Buford by one-hundredth of a second by dipping to the finish line as both wiped out Sally Gunnell's 1993 world record.

"I saw the time and I said oh, my God," said Batten. "I felt like I had leaped, but I still didn't know. Then I felt the air and everybody was pointing at me. So I thought maybe I won."

She did win, in 52.61 seconds to Buford's 52.62 as they surprised everyone by removing Briton Gunnell's world record of 52.74 seconds.

Buford appeared to lose the race in the run-in when

time. Batten said of the dream. "But I know it was a world record time."

The dream bothered her as she knows she has a tendency to get over-excited so she called her coach Terry Long back home in Tallahassee, Florida, and asked for advice.

"I told her the race would not be won in the first 200 metres, that race management would do it," Long said from his home.

But Batten could not shake Buford until that final dip. "I felt that I was ahead at the sixth or seventh hurdle," said Buford. "I told myself, okay, relax. You are ahead."

"I did not relax too much. I tried as hard as I could off the last hurdle. But Kim got me."

champion, who decided not to try to win the 400 metres hurdles as well.

"I owe her one. She was beating up on me in the hurdles when I was down. I refuse to let someone come in the event and beat me up like that," said Batten, who had not been running at top form in the weeks before the World Championships because of inflamed toes.

"I've been trying so hard to gain respect. No one has really given it to me," she said. "Even going into this meet, I was not really considered the favourite. It really made me mad."

"I said I was going to show everybody. I didn't know I was going to break the world record. But I was going to show people that I am a good hurdler."



A BITE IN DELIGHT: An invincible Ukrainian Sergei Bubka bites on his gold medal as if to taste its worthiness for the men's pole vault final, the event he has been dominating more than a decade, at the World Athletics Championships in Gothenburg on Aug 11.

Gunnell gets a booster

GOTHENBURG, Aug 12: Britain's Sally Gunnell was stirred, but not shaken, by the sight of American Kim Batten snatching away her women's 400 metres hurdles world record at the World Athletics Championships on Friday, reports Reuters.

Gunnell, whose season has been wrecked by an Achilles tendon injury, was sitting in the Ullevi Stadium when Batten clocked 52.61 seconds to shave 0.13 seconds from the record the Briton set at the 1993 World Championships in Stuttgart.

But the 29-year-old Olympic champion, who commented on the race for British television, said the loss of the record had just made her more determined to get back to the track next season.

"I've had this year to get recharged. Now this has happened I am keen to get back," Gunnell said. "I'm desperate to get fit now I have seen what happened."

"It has taken a bit of pressure off me going to next year's Olympics in Atlanta. I want to have a good winter and try and run faster."

"It did not look like the kind of race where a world record would go. It was a rugged sort of race," she said.

Michaels the marauders



MASON, Ohio, Aug 12: Two Michaels, Stich and Chang, came back from the brink of defeat to capture quarter-final wins on Friday at the 1.8 million dollars ATP Championship, Stich over Pete Sampras and Chang over Jim Courier, reports Reuters.

his way through a third set. "I just felt tired," the American said after the two hour, two minute match. "It was pretty hot and I was struggling with it a little more than he was."

The hot, humid weather didn't take its toll on top-seeded American Andre Agassi, who captured a 6-3, 6-4 quarter-final victory over 50th-ranked Renzo Furlen of Italy.

Today's semifinals feature Agassi against 13th-seeded Thomas Enqvist of Sweden and Stich against Chang.

Sixth-seeded Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia, looking increasingly disinterested in the outcome of his match, folded to the 13th-ranked Enqvist 4-6, 6-0, 6-3.

The seventh-ranked Ivanisevic was fined 750 dollars for an audible obscenity yelled during the match and another 1,000 dollars for refusing to appear at a post-match press conference.

Earlier, in boiling heat, the eighth-seeded Stich of Germany saved a match point with an ace down the middle at 30-40 in the 10th game of the second set and ended up a 6-7 (5-7), 7-6(7-3), 6-1 winner over an exhausted Sampras, the second seed.

The ace was one of Stich's 27 in the match to Sampras' six.

After losing that match point the second-ranked Sampras wilted and strained

tight match," Stich said. "I told myself not to give up at any stage of the match."

The first set was hotly contested with Sampras just coming through on his third set point in the tie-breaker.

Stich took an early lead in the second set, breaking Sampras' serve in the first game. But Sampras evened the score when Stich snacked a backhand wide at 0-40 in the eighth game.

Sampras never recovered from Stich's preventing him from taking advantage of his one match point.

"I was disappointed I had a match point and was one point away from winning it," Sampras said. "That will hit with me."

The fifth-ranked Chang and 15th-ranked Courier played a three-hour four-minute match that changed momentum numerous times.

Courier seemed in charge with a 6-3, 2-0 lead, but Chang fought back, pushing a second set tie-breaker that nearly ended the match.