

## Cantona's victim turns villain

LONDON, May 3: An English soccer fan who was the victim of a kung-fu kick attack by Eric Cantona jumped out of the dock to attack a prosecutor today after being found guilty of provoking Manchester United's French star, reports Reuter.

The attack came after Matthew Simmons was found guilty of using threatening words and behaviour at a Premier League match between United and Crystal Palace in January 1995.

Before he could be sentenced at Croydon magistrates court, Simmons leaped at prosecution lawyer Jeffery McCann, kicking him in the head and trying to throttle him, witnesses said.

A police officer shouted "get the culs on him" as court officials scuffled with Simmons, 21, a glazier from London with a criminal record of attempted robbery with violence.

Magistrates hurriedly left the court while a furious Simmons shouted: "I'm innocent, I promise, I swear on the bible."

The crop-haired fan was led away to the cells shouting at reporters: "You press, you are scum."

Simmons' attack on McCann came after the lawyer asked magistrates for an order banning the fan from English soccer grounds. McCann, a 56-year-old with a history of high blood pressure, was due to retire at the end of the month.

The court later resumed sitting and a contrite Simmons offered an apology through his lawyer, which McCann accepted.

Simmons was then fined 500 pounds (dollars 750) and ordered to pay legal costs of 200 pounds (dollars 300) following his conviction for using threatening words and behaviour.

Simmons' conviction will draw a line under an incident that blighted the career of the volatile Cantona and further tarnished the poor reputation of English soccer fans.

Cantona was initially jailed for assault for his attack on Simmons but this was later diluted to 120 hours community service. He was also banned from soccer for seven months.

It was unclear if Simmons would face further charges relating to the courtroom affray.

## Chinese nat'l athletics on

BELJING, May 3: China's top athletes meet in Nanjing from Saturday for their national championships, which count as qualifiers for the Atlanta Olympics in July, reports Reuter.

Among those taking part will be female distance star Wang Junxia and her team, Plus Qu Yunzhi and the new "Ma's army." The meeting in the eastern city runs until May 8.

A disastrous 1995 season dominated by internal squabbles saw China take only one medal — and that a silver — at the World Championships.

In Atlanta they will be trying to get back to the form of 1993, a time when China finally earned its place among the greats of athletics.

Those who won prominence included its long and middle-distance track competitors — in particular the famous "Ma's army" of female runners who set a series of impressive world records — plus its throwers.

But the dream soon faded. The original Ma's Army broke up amid disagreements between legendary trainer Ma Junren and his protégés and China's athletes disappeared from prominence after the 1994 Asian Games.

In Nanjing the famous long and middle-distance runners will once again be in the spotlight. Their times should finally give a real indication of their form and the placings they can hope for in Atlanta this summer.

With a berth in the Olympics at stake, the competition between Wang Junxia — women's world record holder at 10,000 metres — and the young team Ma has recruited around Qu Yunxia promises to be fierce.

Qu, the female world record holder at 1,500 metres, has not competed since autumn 1994.

But Qu and others in the "new Ma's army" will be without the precious advice of their guru, who is currently hospitalised in Beijing for treatment for intestinal problems.

Other athletes to watch include the female shot putters Huang Zhihong — silver medalist at the last World Championships — and Sui Xinxie.

In the men's triple jump Zeng Lihui can be expected to make his mark, as can Huang Geng in the long jump, as he regularly records jumps over eight metres.

Others whose form will be studied are female triple jumper Ren Ruping and female long-jumper Yao Wei.

## Real pay the price

GENEVA, May 3: Real Madrid have been fined 105,000 Swiss francs (85,000 dollars) for violence by their fans during the European Cup quarterfinal second leg match against Juventus last month, reports Reuter.

UEFA said on Tuesday that the fine, set by its control and disciplinary committee, took into account not only the violent behaviour of some real fans during the March 20 tie in Turin, but also "material and personal damage caused to the home club."

## Johnson &amp; Lewis so alike

LONDON, May 3: Only one man on the planet can fully appreciate the pressure on Michael Johnson this year as he prepares for a unique double at the Atlanta Olympics, reports Reuter.

Twelve years ago at the Los Angeles Olympics, Carl Lewis emulated fellow-American Jesse Owens by winning gold medals in the 100 and 200 metres long jump and 4x100 metres relay.

Astonishingly Lewis is still competing and hoping to qualify for the US team for Atlanta but the spotlight this year will be on Johnson, who managed to get the Olympic track programme radically revised to accommodate his ambition of a unique 200-400 metres double.

Gold medals in both events plus another in the 4x400 metres relay would elevate Johnson to the same pantheon as Lewis and Owens and help to ensure the success of the third Olympics to be staged in the United States.

The 28-year-old Texan starts his international season at the Rio de Janeiro meeting on Saturday, the opening event of the 1996 Grand Prix circuit and one of the four meetings on his schedule before the Olympic trials in June.

"Michael's situation is similar to what I went through in 1984," Lewis said. "You have to

achieve because I think I perform a lot better when I'm under pressure."

"Having gone through an Olympics before and having gone through a few World Championships, you would think I would have a little more sense of what it is going to be like."

## Howzzat!

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe, May 3: Deep in the heart of southern Africa, a century-old cricketing world record has been broken, reports Reuter.

Wayne James, captain and wicketkeeper of Matabeleland in Zimbabwe, held 11 catches in a match in Bulawayo last month. Add to that two stumpings, and James now boasts the world record for dismissals behind the stumps in a first-class match.

The old record of 12 dismissals was set by Ted Pooley who had eight catches and four stumpings for Surrey against Sussex in a match at the Oval in London in 1868.

It has been equalled twice since then. Don Tallon held nine catches with three stumpings for Queensland in 1939, and Brian Taber did the same for New South Wales in 1968 — but it had never been bettered.

News of James' heroics on April 20 seeped out of Bulawayo slowly, and is only now reaching the rest of the world.

Not that world beating was on James' mind as the remarkable cup final progressed.

"I honestly didn't know about the record until afterwards," he said afterwards at the Bulawayo Athletic Club ground. "Thirteen dismissals seems incredibly low for a wicketkeeping world record, specially after all those years."

Like all good wicketkeepers, James can bat too.

Not content with his place in the record books, the 31-year-old used the same cup final against Mashonaland Country Districts to join a rare group of players who have scored 99 runs in each innings of a match.

In the first innings he took the crease with his team on 15 for three and guided them to 220, falling just one run short of his century off 185 balls.

In the second, he was facing the bowling on 99 with the match scores level and Matabeleland poised for victory.

But Mashonaland's left-hand paceman Brian Strang delivered a wide leg side ball that flew to the boundary for four byes, handing Matabeleland the cup and denying James his century.

"I didn't actually know about the first 99 because the main scoreboard had gone on the blink," James said afterwards. "And the second time? Well, that's cricket. I had my chances in the previous over but couldn't score, but at least we won the cup."



MICHAEL JOHNSON

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The Olympic Games bring together the best in the world and it's going to be difficult dealing with the expectations, dealing with the press, the training and travelling. And the schedule will be very tough."

Johnson, who spent 18 months trying to get the Olympic programme changed, can now concentrate on preparing for Atlanta.

It definitely adds a tremendous amount of pressure going into the games. People are going to say an entire Olympics schedule was changed for you," he said.

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