

## Return of the vanquished

PRAGUE, July 2: Thousands of Czech soccer fans crowded Prague's 13th century old Town Square on Monday to welcome home their soccer team despite the 2-1 defeat against Germany in the European Championship final, reports Reuters.

The squad travelled from the airport to the city centre in a double-decker bus and then waded into the crowd, signing autographs and kicking soccer balls as the national anthem, "where is my home," rang out.

"Thanks for the support you have given us and thanks also to those fans who made the trip to England," said striker Pavel Kuka, who, like many team members, was visibly moved by the show of support.

The Czechs, who were expected to be little more than fodder for group rivals Germany and Italy in the preliminary round, captured the hearts of fans at home and abroad with a plucky effort throughout the tournament.

But a storybook ending was not to be had in Sunday's final when German striker Oliver Bierhoff scored his second goal of the game, a "golden goal," in the fifth minute of sudden-death extra time to give Germany a 2-1 win and the championship.

The Czech Republic was forced to rebuild its team from scratch following the country's split with former federation partner Slovakia in 1993.

## Major views

LONDON, July 2: The British Prime Minister John Major praised the Euro '96 tournament in an article for the Daily Telegraph on Monday, reports AFP.

Major lauded both home nations, England and Scotland, and acknowledged the debt to coach Terry Venables.

Major has strong views on the tournament, and clearly spent time analysing the games. "I could not have been more proud of the team," Major wrote.

"With the likes of Jamie Redknapp, Steve McNamara, Philip and Gary Neville and Robbie Fowler at the beginning of their international careers, the future looks bright."

"And in Alan Shearer I believe we have the most complete centre-forward in the world."

Regarding the way in which matches were decided, he writes: "...perhaps FIFA and UEFA should look again at a system which puts such pressure on each penalty-taker and brings such personal anguish to those who miss."

"Having said that, there are no easy solutions. A corner-kick countback after extra-time is one idea that has been floated but it is not one I find particularly attractive. It is too mechanistic for the charm of football."

Continuing extra time until a team score might be a better and would ensure that a game was decided by team success rather than individual failure. Major goes on to congratulate Germany on their victory, and praise the way in which the tournament brought Britain together as a nation.

## Frenchwoman faring well

WIMBLEDON, July 2: Mary Pierce is into the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam event for the first time since 1994, and in only her second appearance at Wimbledon — of all places, reports AP.

"The past years, I wanted to play here. ... there were always incidents where I just couldn't," said Pierce, an oblique reference to her troubled life off the court.

After an unstable couple of years marked by a recent falling out with her mother and a break with her volatile father who was banned from women's tour events, the 21-year-old Pierce has new mentor in Brad Gilbert and a spot in the final eight on grass — her weakest surface.

What Gilbert couldn't do for another star pupil, Andre Agassi — who stumbled in the first round — he seems to have done for Pierce.

"Brad is just really laid back and we talk a lot about a lot of different things," said Pierce, who split with her last coach, Nick Bollettieri, several months ago.

"Our training has been, you know, really intense but also just really laid back and at the same time it's a lot of fun," she added. "Just joking around, but really concentrating the time I'm on the court."

Pierce has been playing in the backwoods, for from Centre Court, Court 1 or even Court 2. Monday she defeated Elena Likhovtseva of Kazakhstan in two sets in a rain-delayed match on Court 14, a minor show court.

"I don't mind. It is better off that way. I just come here to play tennis, not matter what court they put me on," said Pierce, who faces Kimiko Date in the quarterfinals. "But I guess now is where all the action starts."

In the recent French Open, Pierce wore a sexy, eye-catching black tennis dress but was eliminated early, leading to questions about the credibility of her victory in the 1995 Australian Open and her runner-up finish in the French two years ago.

The low-cut black dress has given way at Wimbledon to a traditional white dress — and a low profile — for the Canadian-born, Florida-based Frenchwoman.



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Oliver Bierhoff, who scored both the goals in Germany's 2-1 win over the Czech Republic in the final of the European Championship at Wembley on Sunday, holds the trophy in a boisterous and ticker-tape reception at the Frankfurt 'Roemer' Square on Monday.

— AFP/UNB photo

## 'Kings of Europe' back home



FRANKFURT, July 2: Europe's new soccer champions, Germany, returned home on Monday to a rapturous reception from thousands of flag-waving fans who packed Frankfurt's town centre to welcome their sporting heroes, reports Reuters.

Some 30,000 supporters filled the historic Roemerberg Square to see the players, who led the crowd in singing "We are the champions."

From the balcony of the town hall the exhausted-looking team members, showing signs of a hard night's celebrations, held aloft the Henri Delaunay Trophy to the roars of the delirious crowd. The players then performed a Mexican wave.

"It's coming home, football's coming home" sang striker Juergen Klinsmann, Philip and Gary Neville and Robbie Fowler at the beginning of their international careers, the future looks bright."

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1990," said Oswald Zoettlein, a municipal official.

"The reception is totally overwhelming," said match-winner Oliver Bierhoff, who

## Rowdy fans

BONN, July 2: Drunken German fans ran amok and clashed with police following the national team's 2-1 win over the Czech Republic in Sunday's Euro '96 final, police said on Monday, reports Reuters.

About 30 people were detained in the western state of north Rhine-Westphalia after brawls broke out in Essen, Duesseldorf and other cities, police said.

In Herne, vandals smashed shop windows, plundered a sporting goods store and damaged parked cars. Drunken fans threw bottles and beer glasses at police, who responded in force to restore order. Several police cars were damaged.

Troublemakers also threw bottles at police in Berlin while in Metmann police detained two men who shot fireworks into a crowd of people watching the match. No one was hurt.

Flag-waving supporters across the country danced in the streets after seeking their team clinch United Germany's first major championship.

Police, said around 4,000 people had gathered on the Muehlendamm, Berlin's main "street-to-celebrate." Mostly "peaceful" crowds thronged other major cities as well.

scored both German goals in their 2-1 win over the Czech Republic.

Andreas Moeller, who missed the final through suspension, said: "It was really fun. It is a great thing to be here in Frankfurt and to get a reception like this."

German manager Berti Vogts rendered himself to the crowd when he pushed 13-year-old Matthias Jakob in his wheelchair into the circle of team players to obtain autographs.

Every aspect of the team's arrival in Germany was broadcast live on television, including the 30-minute bus ride from Frankfurt airport to the town centre where supporters had been waiting before the plane had landed.

The players were welcomed at the airport by the mayor of Frankfurt but supporters were encouraged to stay in the city centre for fear of chaos in the arrivals hall.

Many of the players, including libero Matthias Sammer and defender Dieter Elts, had to limp down the gangway nursing the injuries which briefly threatened to leave the team without a full complement of players for the final.

Goalkeeper Andreas Koepke, whose penalty save took Germany through the semifinal against England, carried the championship trophy off the aircraft together with his young daughter.

For part of the flight from London, the Luftwaffe jet was escorted by a guard of honour of air force Tornado fighter planes.

## Gazza, Sheryl get spliced

LONDON, July 2: England's trouble-prone soccer hero Paul Gascoigne, "Gazza," to his fans, on Monday married the mother of his child in an ostentatious ceremony with his teammates on hand to lend support, reports Reuters.

The wedding, at an exclusive country hotel where "Gazza" had booked all the rooms to deter unwelcome guests, was held less than a week after the English soccer team was beaten by Germany in a Euro '96 semifinal.

Guests included the entire side and Terry Venables, who stepped down as manager after the German defeat.

The guests arrived at the hotel in white limousines with blacked out windows, frustrating dozens of fans who had waited in the rain hoping for a glimpse of their heroes.

Newspapers said Gascoigne had chosen a gold-coloured taitcoat for his wedding day while his bride, divorcee Sheryl Faires, was to wear pink tulle and lace.

Tabloid newspapers say the couple have had a stormy five-year relationship. When Faires gave birth to their son Regan four months ago, Gascoigne was said to be drinking with friends.

Tabloid newspapers said Faires, 31, had banned the star from holding a traditional eve-of-wedding celebration with his male friends because she feared he would miss the wedding.

Gascoigne proposed to Faires two weeks ago after he scored a spectacular goal in England's victorious match against Scotland in the first round of the European Championship.

The media were excluded from the 100,000 pound (155,400 dollars) wedding, except for a glossy magazine which reportedly paid 150,000 pounds for exclusive photographs.

## 'Poetic justice'

LONDON, July 2: An English soccer fan has taken revenge on Euro '96 winners Germany, reports Reuters.

Peter Gibbons, 33, is refusing to give the Germans their ball back after Sunday's final, remembering how in 1966 German player Helmut Haller made off with the World Cup final ball.

It was eventually tracked down earlier this year and has now been returned to English hattrick scorer Geoff Hurst.

Gibbons smuggled the Euro '96 ball out under his shirt on Sunday after it was booted into the Wembley crowd by a jubilant player as the game ended. Gibbons told Tuesday's Sun newspaper: "I call it Poetic justice."

## Georgia dressed for Olympics

ATLANTA, July 2: English became the official language of the state of Georgia on Monday, just as Olympic organisers scrambled to transform Atlanta into an international city in time for the Summer Games, reports Reuters.

A new state law, passed by the legislature earlier this year to become effective July 1, designates English as the primary language of government. That means all government meetings must be conducted and government records kept in English.

Critics have derided the legislation as a xenophobic "English-only" measure, intended as a symbolic stand against the rising tide of multiculturalism in American society.

The law imposes no restrictions on language services for Olympic visitors. Nor does it contravene the International Olympic Committee's designation of English and French as the official languages of the international athletic fete.

However, it has been criticised as an embarrassment for Georgia at a time when the state is preparing to greet an estimated 2 million visitors to the Olympic Games.

The bill's author, republican state Sen Mike Crotts, says the legislation was never meant to address cultural issues. Instead, it was intended to stop tax money from being spent to record deeds, wills and other government transactions in languages other than English.

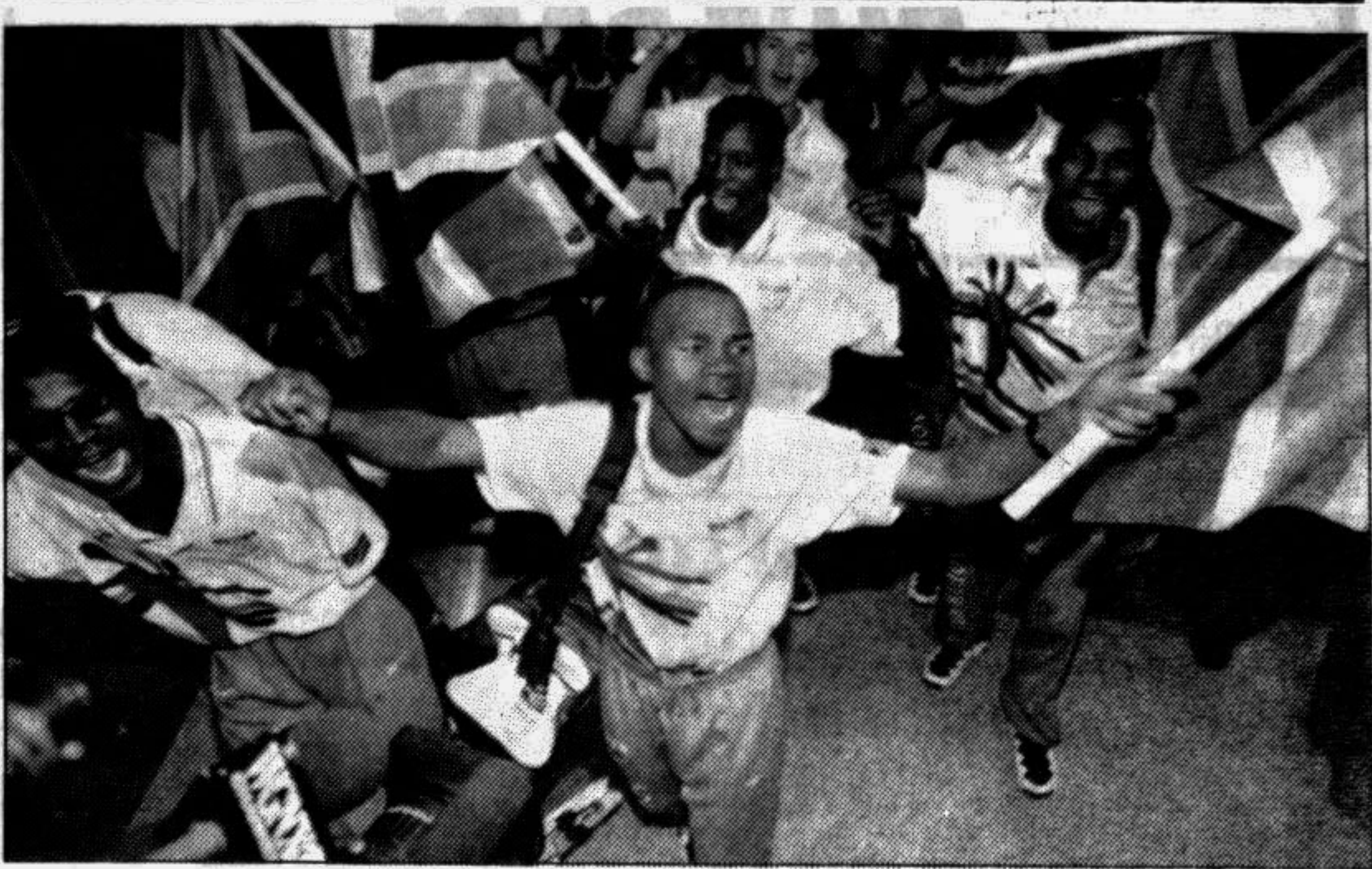
"There are 166 languages spoken in Georgia," said Crotts, who represents Conyers, Georgia. The reason we can't practically operate government in multiple languages is that first of all, economically, we can't afford it."

Under the law, individuals can still file documents in foreign languages. But now they also must pay for an English translation that is filed simultaneously.

## Johnson's next target

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, July 2: Michael Johnson, who will attempt a unique 200-400 metres double at the Atlanta Olympics this month, chases the world 400 record at the Lausanne Grand Prix on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Johnson slashed Pietro Mennea's 17-year-old world 200 metres record at the US Olympic trials last month and has now set his sights on fellow-American Butch Reynolds' mark of 43.29 seconds set in Zurich eight years ago.



Boxer Hawk Makepula (C) leads the South African Olympic team through the terminal of Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta on July 1.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Anti-crime brochure!



ATLANTA, July 2: Olympic visitors will be given brochures with tips on avoiding crime to help ease the workload for thousands of policemen who will be out in force during the Summer Games, officials said on Monday, reports Reuters.

With half a million people expected to pour into Atlanta later this month, the up to 30,000 law officers slated for duty will be under tremendous pressure. Brochures and posters will urge foreign visitors to use common sense to avoid crime.

Gary McConnell, chief of staff of Georgia's state Olympic law enforcement command, warned that foreign and domestic visitors should head the safety tips because police will have their hands full.

"If you bring 3 million people into downtown Atlanta and you put out 25,000 or 30,000 law enforcement personnel divided up on three shifts they certainly won't be intrusive standing on the street corner," McConnell said.

Major John Gordon of the Atlanta police department said officers would be "fair but firm" with Olympic visitors unversed in local laws. All the city's police cars will be on the streets 24 hours a day during the Games, he said.

About 200,000 brochures with safety tips in English, French and Spanish will be given to visitors arriving over the next few weeks. They will also be distributed at hotels, American consulates and Olympic information kiosks.

Immigration officials expect about 500,000 foreign visitors to descend on Atlanta during the three weeks of the Games. Tom Fisher, district director of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, said about 60 per cent of those visitors will fly directly to Atlanta.

The biggest problems for visitors will be "Traffic and heat," predicted McConnell, a

former sheriff who now heads the Georgia emergency management agency.

"If it's 105 degrees (40.5 C) and you're been standing there for three hours, things that would make you mad at 3 o'clock in the afternoon might not bother you at 7 o'clock that morning," he said.

## BOMB HOAX

Earlier, Games security went on red alert after two suspicious packages were found near the Athletes' Village.

The scare turned out to be a false alarm, but anti-nuclear protesters said it highlighted the potential risk of attack on an ageing nuclear reactor in the middle of the Village.

A bomb squad was called to inspect a suitcase and a small box found during a sweep of the campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology.

"The items were examined and found to be harmless," the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) said in a terse statement.

The scare came as security forces were in the process of mounting their first day of full-scale protection of the campus where some 14,000 athletes and officials will stay.

"It also took place as Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell, Georgia Gov Zell Miller and ACOG chief Billy Payne were attending a ceremony to mark the Village's official opening."

There was no sign of increased security or the bomb scare during the ceremony, which was attended by 200 journalists.

The Village, in the centre of Atlanta, is guarded by a 10-foot (three-metre) high chain link fence topped by razor wire and electric-fencing.

Details of the incident remained sketchy, with Atlanta City police saying the box and suitcase had been discovered not in the Olympic Village but in a retirement home near the Georgia Tech campus.

Anti-nuclear protesters said the scare confirmed their worst fears of disaster during the Games because of an ageing nuclear reactor situated in the middle of the village.

ACOG and Georgia Tech officials say they have removed the fuel rods from the reactor core to make the area safe for athletes, but anti-nuclear protesters say there was still a huge radio active inventory on site.

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## Soldier Tergat's tactical advance in battle for gold

Paul Tergat's recipe for Olympic success is traditional Kenyan food, a stress-free home life and military training. But he also has another asset, reports Gemini News Service — he has learned to run tactically.

RO Otani writes from Nairobi

WORLD cross-country champion Paul Tergat is sure the Olympic 10,000 metres event will be a two-man race — and that he will be one of them.

"My only worry," he says, is Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie, the man he beat on a 12,000-metre circuit near Cape Town earlier this year to take his second world cross-country title.

Gebrselassie is given a good chance of winning gold at the forthcoming Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia, but Tergat is confident. He feels no other competitor will get a look-in.

He has good reason to be confident. A week after bagging the cross-country title in South Africa in April, the 27-year-old Kenyan broke the world half-marathon record in Italy. He completed the 13.1 mile course in 58 minutes and 51 seconds, knocking a minute off the previous record.

He is hoping he has hit peak form at exactly the right time for the Olympic challenge.

To help him go for gold, he has several proven assets and one new one.

The old ones include a simple home-life on the outskirts of Nairobi and traditional Kenyan food.

"We are basically farmers. Most of our food comes from home in Baringo in the Rift Valley, the hotbed of Kenyan track starts. The food has, as its basic ingredients, maize, meal and sour milk."

"This is the basic food of an athlete," he says of the carbohydrates and protein. "To succeed, you must eat well and live humbly and without any stress. When we are training, we try as much as possible to avoid tension."

His happiness and success, he says, begin at home, with his son Ron, Daughter Harriet and wife, Monica — who he names as the source of his inspiration. She is also his physiotherapist.

wife in this house," she admits. "But I'm not complaining. I must relax his muscles with a liniment after a race."

Tergat is also a Christian and believes his domestic happiness is provided "by none other than God, who has also made of my what I am today."

He says he also owes much to his military training. As a non-commissioned officer in

one's best."

Tergat is training with the Kenyan armed forces track team in the Ngong hills, east of Nairobi. He runs every morning and evening in the Ngong forest and works on improving his sprinting at the Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi.

His latest asset is his greater recognition of the importance of tactics.

"I have learned to run tactically," he says with a smile. "Gone are the days when I would just run and run. Now it's not necessarily how strong one is, but how prepared physically and psychologically."

He proved it by running from the back for the first 10 kilometres of the South African 12,000 metres race, while compatriots Paul Koech, Ishmael Kirui and Joseph Kimani set the pace. Tergat then stormed to the front to open up a huge gap between himself and Gebrselassie.

A former basketball player, Tergat stands 1.82 metres tall and weighs of 62 kilograms.

He started running seriously in 1989, and within three years had become one of Kenya's outstanding cross-country races.

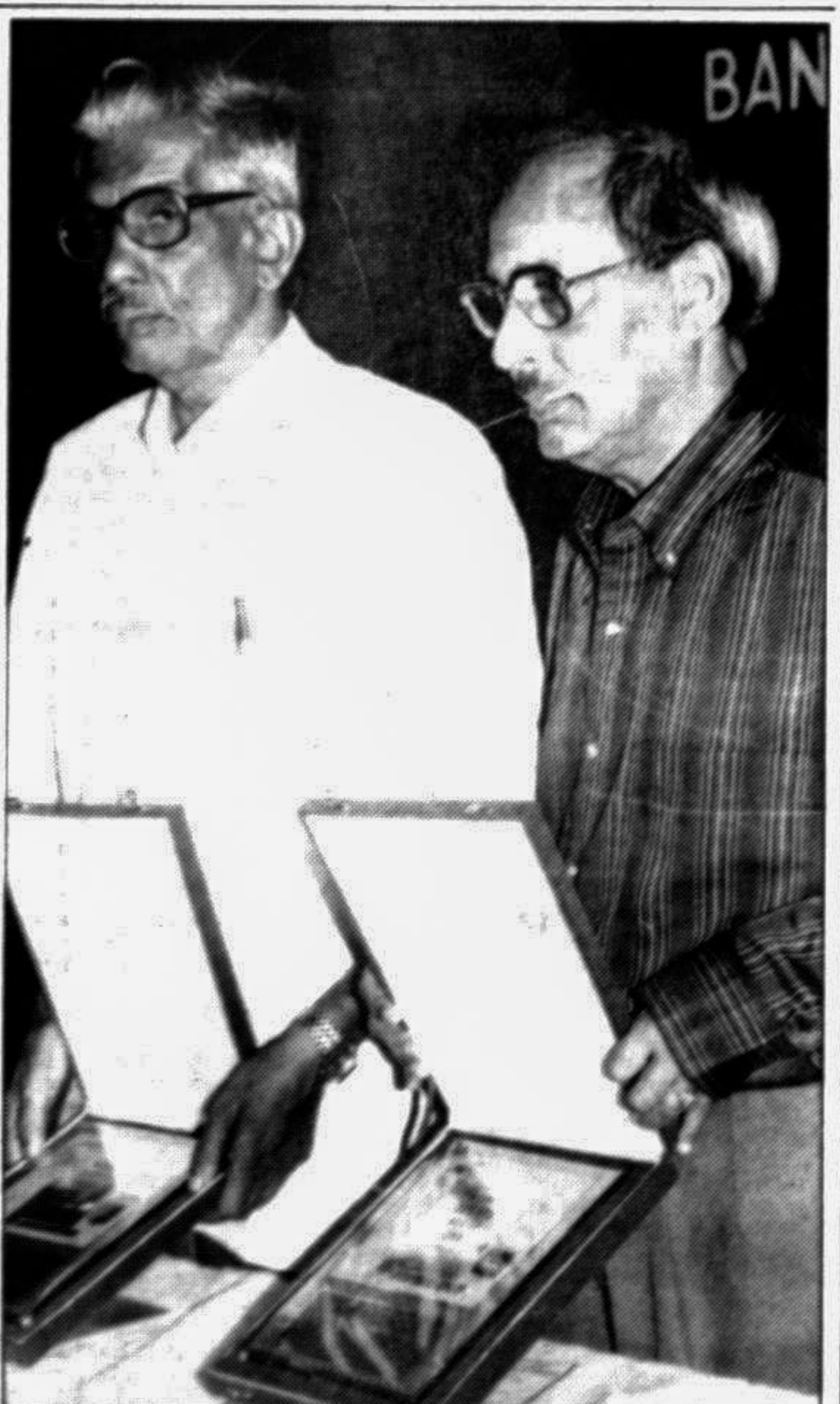
In 1992 he scored victories in the armed forces championships and in several national events. An injury put him out of action for two years, but in 1995 he stormed back to his first world cross-country championship victory in Durham, England, unseating fellow Kenyan William Siegel.

One thing is sure: Whether he wins or loses in Atlanta, he will take it in good grace.

"Many people forget the fact that during a race, or any fight for that matter, there must be a winner and a loser," he says. "If you're beaten, take it as being part of the game and train harder for the next race. If I lose a race, the first thing I do is hug and congratulate the winner."

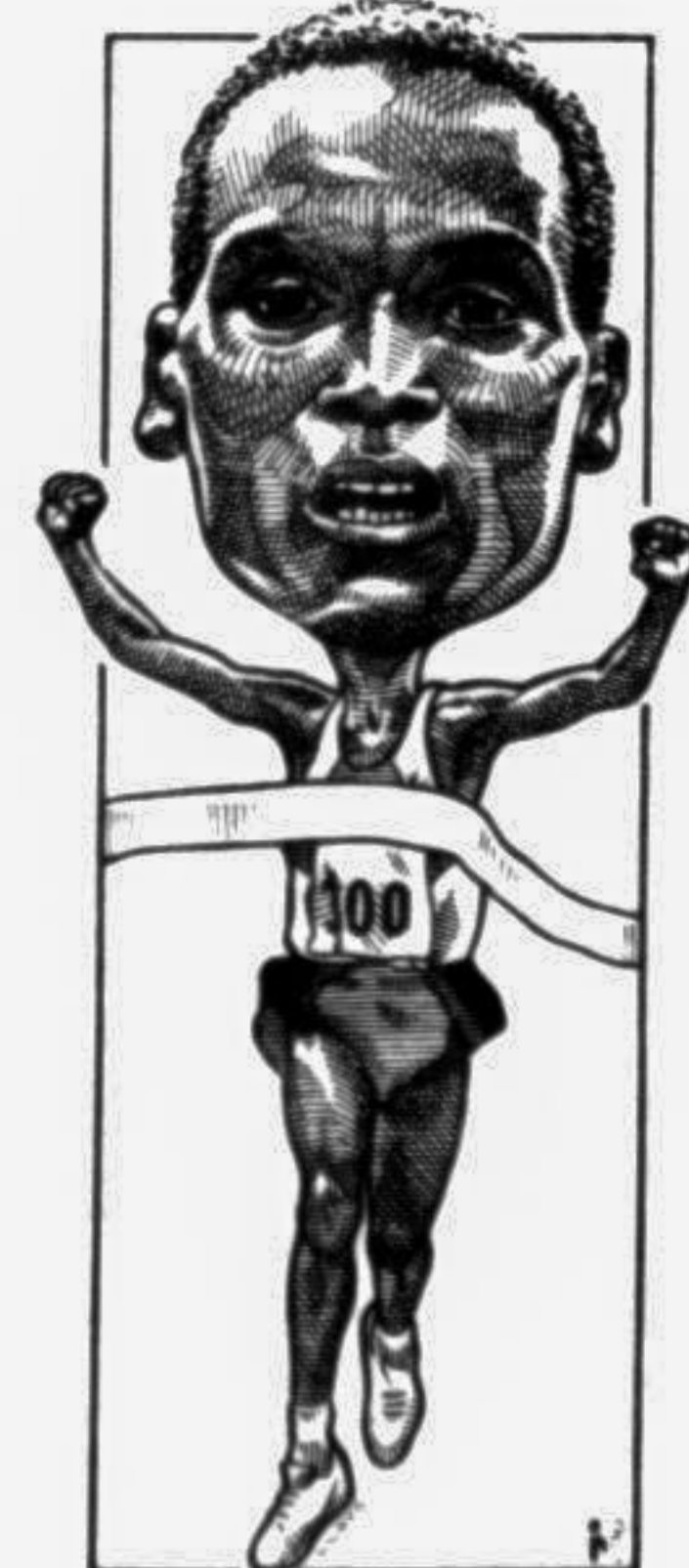
— Gemini

About the Author: Robert O Otani is a freelance Kenyan journalist, based in Kisumu.



Abdul Awal Khan (R) and Mohammad Masir Hossain (L), the two senior sports journalists who were felicitated by Bangladesh Sports Writers Association, pose with the BSWA crest at the NSC conference room yesterday.

— Star photo



Kenya's Paul Tergat: "Eat well and live humbly"