

# A journey to the dark

PARIS, July 14 (AFP): He was one of the most exciting athletes in the world. A ball of rippling muscle who battled with Carl Lewis for the title of the fastest man on earth.

Nowadays, Ben Johnson is simply remembered as the world's most notorious sporting drug dealer.

He ran the fastest 100m ever seen at the 1988 Seoul Olympics — and was assured of wealth and fame.

Johnson then tested positive for the anabolic steroid stanozolol and was disgraced. He initially said he knew nothing about the drug — as has become standard in such cases — but later admitted to serial steroid abuse over several years.

Johnson was allowed to return to competition in 1991 but was banned for life two years later after testing positive for the growth hormone testosterone.

The unfortunate, dumb Johnson may be the most high-profile of all the sporting drug cheats, but he is just one of hundreds of top-level competitors who have failed tests.

Red wine and strychnine was used as a stimulant around the turn of the century, when drug tests were unheard of.

Amphetamines were widely used by cyclists several decades ago, resulting in the death of Tommy Simpson on Mount Ventoux in 1967. The Dane, Knud Jensen, died after a violent reaction to another stimulant seven years earlier.

And there has been an on-going saga of big names who have failed drug tests ever since Dutch decathlete Eduard de Noorlander made history in 1969.

De Noorlander tested positive for steroids at the 1969 European Championships and went into the record books as the first man to be disqualified from a major sporting event for failing a drug test.

Three years later, tests for steroids were introduced at the 1972 Olympic Games: the battle was on.

Track and field, swimming and weightlifting have produced probably the highest-profile drug cheats: athletes who have either failed tests for performance-enhancing substances or refused to take tests when ordered to do so.

Here are just some of the names in track and field, although several of those who failed tests have continued to

proclaim their innocence.

Tatyana Kazankina, Butch Reynolds, Martti Vainio, Katrin Krabbe, Jason Livingstone, Larry Myricks, John Ngugi, Randy Barnes and Dmitry Savchenko were among the biggest names in their respective events, competing and winning at major international events.

Yet all failed, or refused to take drug tests.

Kazankina, the Russian world 1,500 metres record holder, was the first world record holder banned when she declined to take a drug test.

Vainio was caught in 1984 when the blood he reintroduced to his system contained steroids.

Butch Reynolds, the 400 metres world record holder, tested positive for the steroid nandrolone at a meeting in Monaco in 1990. He maintained samples had been mixed up and went to court. He was awarded 27 million dollars in damages but the IAAF successfully contested the award. The affair rumbles on.

Dual world championship gold medalist Krabbe tested positive to the stimulant clenbuterol, along with two German teammates. She still protests her innocence and was subsequently cleared.

Later in 1992, Livingstone, the European indoor champion over 60m, tested positive for steroids prior to the Barcelona Olympics.

Ngugi, Kenya's multiple world cross country champion, was suspended after refusing to take a test in 1993, while American long jumper Myricks was barred for four years last year after a positive test, as was Shevchenko, the 1995 Grand Prix discus champion.

American shot putter Barnes was ousted for two years after being found to have used methyl testosterone.

Britain's Dianne Modahl, a Commonwealth Games 800 metres champion who tested positive for testosterone in 1994, fought a long battle to establish her innocence and will now compete at Atlanta.

Birgit Dreßel, a German who finished fourth in the 1986 European championships, didn't fail a test — but drugs cost her life.

She died in hospital a year later after an allergic reaction to various performance-enhancing drugs, including steroids.

Athletes will do almost anything to avoid detection.

In 1992, Russian 1,500 metres runner Natalia Artemova was banned for life after she tried to trick drug testing officials by concealing a pouch of untainted urine in her underwear. It was a ruse cyclists had used for decades.

Canadian sprinter Angela Issajenko admitted in the wake of the Johnson affair that she had taken steroids for several years.

But such abuse is not restricted to track and field, which is merely the highest profile sport, and cycling.

Weightlifters and swimmers have cheated in the same way.

Anabolic steroids were rife in East German swimming, as well as track and cycling, between 1970 and 1990, leading coaches have subsequently admitted.

As recently as 1983, German swimmer Astrid Strauss fell foul of the drug testers.

East German athletes won 153 gold medals in five Summer Olympic Games between 1968 and 1988 and documents seized after the fall of the Berlin wall exposed the systematic doping of athletes as part of the war of ideologies against the West.

Chinese women swimmers began setting a succession of world records three years ago, but seven failed drug tests after the 1995 Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan.

Nearly 300 Russian athletes failed drug tests in the three years leading up to the Seoul Olympics, while Chinese swimmers have recently come increasingly under the spotlight.

Seven, including two world champions, were banned for between two and four years after testing positive at the Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1984.

The Chinese were banned from the subsequent Pan-Pacific Games but will compete at Atlanta — much to the ire of the Australians and several other nations.

At Atlanta, it was hoped that new high-tech testing machines known as spectrometers would step up the war against the cheats. The installation of the machines was delayed, however, and there are now doubts just how effective the testing programme will be.

## Other side of the Olympics

ATLANTA, July 14 (Reuters): David Chesnut has a message for the organisers of the Olympic Games: "When you're finished, may I please have my city back?"

The 44-year-old freelance advertising consultant is excited about the Olympics but has some choice words for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG).

"It's like they're throwing a big party in your back yard, but you find out that all they want you to do is clean up the mess," he told the Atlanta constitution.

So Chesnut has set himself up as the friendly opposition, selling T-shirts that carry his "my city" slogan next to the logo of an organisation he calls ADOG — Atlantans Disgusted with the Olympic Games.

Chesnut even has taken on the ACOG cartoon mascot IZZY, with "a dog" called PIZZY.

However, sincere Chesnut may be in his opposition, he has managed to keep the invective light-hearted.

For instance, one of his complaints is that ACOG officials have never, to his knowledge, used the words "please," "thank you," or "I'm sorry" in their dealings with local residents.

Of the 500 T-shirts he says he has sold, Chesnut said a substantial number have gone to buyers at the Georgia Institute of Technology: home of the Olympic Village.

"I can't name which department because they're frightened for their lives," he jokes. "Gorgia Tech is a hotbed of anti-Acogism."

## Rosset eats his words!

GSTAAD, July 14: Swiss Olympic tennis champion Marc Rosset said on Saturday he had decided to defend his title in Atlanta, reports Reuters.

The world ranked number 16 had said last Wednesday he was having second thoughts about playing in Atlanta after losing in the opening round of the Swiss Open to German qualifier Oliver Gross.

But shortly after losing in the semifinal of the men's doubles with partner Cedric Pioline of France, Rosset told reporters, "I'm announcing to you that I've decided to participate in the Olympics."

"It wasn't an easy decision. I have thought a lot about it these last few days. But the Olympic Games are important and this could be my last chance to participate."

"I want to live that experience I had in Barcelona." But like many other top ranked players, including Austria's Thomas Muster, Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Germany's Boris Becker, numbers two, four and five in the world rankings respectively, Rosset said that defending his gold medal was not as important as defending his position in the rankings.

Rosset said he had put together a programme that would allow him to defend both his medal and his place in the rankings.

"My programme will consist of the Olympics (tournaments in) Cincinnati and Toronto and the US Open which will allow me to defend my Olympic title and win enough points on the ATP," said Rosset.

## Rain the spoiler

NEWPORT, Rhode Island, July 14: Heavy rains dumped by Hurricane Bertha washed out play at the Hall of Fame tennis championships on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The semifinals, as well as the final, have been rescheduled for today.

The semifinals feature four unseeded players. Leader Paes of India will face Nicolas Pereira of Venezuela and Canada's Daniel Nestor plays Grant Stafford of South Africa.

Paes upset top seed Byron Black of Zimbabwe, 6-1, 3-6, 6-4, in the quarterfinals Friday, since it began in 1977, no top seed has won this tournament, the only grasscourt tournament in North America.



IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch (C) and ACOG president Billy Payne arrive at the official opening of the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta on July 13. — AFP/UNB photo

## Of the emotional bricks

ATLANTA, July 14 (Reuters): A lot of romance, some tragedy and a touch of mystery were underfoot on Saturday when a park designed to be the public hub of the Olympic Games opened to the public for the first time.

While officials gave speeches and commercial sponsors opened gleaming pavilions, many visitors looked downwards to inspect thousands of personalised bricks forming paths and squares in the 21-acre (9.5-hectare) Centennial Olympic Park.

The bricks are a mosaic of messages, some puzzling and others mysterious, bought by the public to raise cash for the Games but also to preserve a small piece of eternity in downtown Atlanta.

Some, such as Lucy and Jenny, wanted only to leave their names, with no further explanation. Others, including

President Bill Clinton or Atlanta's explanation. Others, including President Bill Clinton or Atlanta's Olympic supremo Billy Payne, need little introduction.

VIPs whose names have been added to the brick walk ways include sometime Atlanta resident Elton John, Juan Antonio Samaranch and fellow members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and former US military chief general Colin Powell.

Brick owners each brick cost \$5 dollars — can find their piece of history at computer terminals dotted through the park which spit out a paper slip giving an approximate location, within a block of 1,000.

"We came down to have a look, but I had no idea it would be so difficult to find. There sure are a lot of bricks," said Atlanta resident James Carlton.

Messages of love and friendship seem the most popular. "Steve Milby, I love

you daddy," "Nancy Paul, my best friend," and "Mary Sager, old friend and love" are etched in the brickwork. So too are "Tom and William, two gay dudes."

One Romantic popped the question in brick, offering his girlfriend the engraving "Joy, will you marry me?"

Other messages haunt "Robin L. Rogers, 2/4/82-6/27/82." "We miss you, little angel" and "In memory of G. Grafton" made Saturday's visitors pause for thought.

Fittingly for an Olympic park, dozens of nationalities are represented, from Finland to Australia.

Others will remain a puzzle to all except the donor, such as "SPY 2 MAUI 2003," "WALLY we're on top LUFIE" and "JIM ISSA 1995."

Even Elvis Presley gets in on the act. One brick marks his birth, but leaves the date of his demise as a question mark.

## Tensions take back seat

ATLANTA, July 14 (Reuters): Romance may blossom in the Olympic Village but most athletes are more interested in chasing medals.

About 10,000 competitors sitting around in the sun prompted the Atlanta Journal to forecast: "Whoopie could become an unofficial Olympic sport in the village."

But Indian hockey player Gavin Ferreira had his eyes firmly set on the tournament ahead. It's too early for any romance to blossom. Competition is too tough and anyway I'm not looking," he said.

Romance apart, the village has enough free attractions to keep athletes happy 24 hours a day.

The homesick can head for the surf shack and link into the Internet to send messages wherever they want.

Musicians can look forward to a string of top flight concerts from rap artist LL Cool J to the reggae beat of Ziggy Marley.

Athletes from 197 countries are queuing up for treatment at the massage parlour where aromatherapy specialist Patty Beggs said, "We want them to feel good and focused."

The Laser video games room is packed with athletes soaring through space on a virtual reality hang glider sking on a black run.

They can indulge in a game of Q zar, a kind of Laser tag played out in a luminous green and orange maze. Mexicans are

playing poles, Ukrainians challenging Australians.

Willie Banks, a former triple jumper and veteran of four Olympics, knows all about the tensions of competition. That's why, as head of entertainment in the Village, he is determined they should all have a chance to wind down.

Political sensitivities are borne in mind. Palestinians and Israelis, Iraqis and Kuwaitis are not housed in the same apartment blocks. "You can be confident they won't be room mates," said one official.

The Village offers no alcohol but the nights can still be lovely enough.

The foam bath in the Village disco is proving a big hit as athletes disappear under a mound of bubbles.

## China live under cloud

AUBURN, Alabama, July 14 (AFP): The Asian Games doping scandal launched China on a massive anti-drugs campaign, but it seems there is nothing the Chinese can do to lift the cloud of suspicion that surrounds their Olympic swimmers.

"We already made a huge effort," said Zhou Ming, deputy head coach of the Chinese Olympic swimming team. "We started a long time ago."

"Some athletes are taking up to 500-600 tests a year, not just in competition but also during training. That's how seriously we take this testing."

Seven Chinese swimmers, including two 1994 world champions, tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs at the 1994 Asian Games.

The affair prompted a purge of coaches and swimmers by the Chinese federation, as well as an investigation by FINA, the sport's governing body.

FINA's conclusions were condemned by many observers, and US Olympic women's coach Richard Quick and Australian coach Don Talbot have continued to call for China to be banned from international competition.

American coach John Leonard, vice president of the World Swim Coaches Association, claims China has "hidden" swimmers by keeping them out of the top 50 of the world rankings so they would not be subject to FINA drug tests.

"That's impossible," Zhou said. "That's a ridiculous accusation."

He said all of the swimmers at the Chinese national championships, their Olympic trials, were ranked in the top 20 in China and were subject to repeated testing by Chinese authorities.

And he said the entire Olympic team were tested by FINA after the trials.

It is true that China brings several inexperienced swimmers to the games. Lin Li is the only one of China's four 1992 gold medalists to defend her title here.

But Zhou said the change was due to a natural shift in generations.

## Shocking!

CAIRO, July 14: Several people were killed during violent incidents at a soccer match in the Libyan capital Tripoli, state-run Libyan television reported, reports AP.

The broadcast Saturday night said the violence took place during a game between Al-Ittihad and Al-Ahli Clubs. It did not say exactly when the match occurred or how many were killed.

The broadcast, monitored by the BBC in London, said sports officials held an emergency meeting and disbanded both clubs.

The officials also declared a 24-hour period of mourning for the dead starting at mid night Saturday (2100 GMT)

## Pierce brings France back on track

BAYONNE, France, July 14: Former Australian Open champion Mary Pierce showed a welcome return to form as she beat Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 6-3, 6-4 to pull France back to 1-1 in their Fed Cup semifinal against Spain on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Conchita Martinez had earlier given Spain a fine start with a 1-6, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Julie Halard.

Pierce, who has been criticised after recent erratic performances which have seen her slump to world no 14, had refused to play in the previous round against Argentina.

But she put pressure on World number 3 Sanchez-Vicario from the start with a stylish attacking display, comfortably taking the opening set.

The Spaniard, who last week contested the Wimbledon final against Steffi Graf, tried to fight back in the second set.

But Pierce gained a vital service break and with her own service working well, she moved to victory with some ease.

Martinez lost the finest set in 26 minutes as 20th ranked Halard responded to the encouragement of the partisan crowd.

But she was unable to maintain the peace as world no. 2 Martinez fought her way back into the match with superb baseline play.

The Spaniard gained an early service break to win the second set, and comfortably took the third for the match.

French captain Francoise Durr was optimistic that France could reach their first final. But she added, "I don't see how we could have made it if Mary Pierce had been defeated today."

Spain have appeared in six finals, winning four times. But the French have not progressed beyond the semifinals, which they have contested seven times.

The winners will meet the United States or Japan in the final in September. The US took a 2-0 lead in their semifinal earlier on Saturday through victories by Lindsay Davenport and Monica Seles.

## Ralf retains WBO crown

ESSEN, Germany, July 14: Germany's Ralf Röchigian defended his WBO cruiserweight title Saturday for the fourth time by winning a controversial decision over Nigeria's Bashiru Ali, reports AP.

All three judges ruled Röchigian the winner, but after the fight the largely German crowd was chanting "Ali, Ali" for the 40-year-old Nigerian.

The German, who improved to 39-7-7, dominated the first six rounds against Ali, the WBO's No 1 challenger. He easily landed left jabs over the Nigerian's lowered gloves.

But Ali, now 41-14, began to press the attack in the seventh round against Röchigian, who scarcely threw a punch at times.

The judges ruled the fight 115-113, 116-112 and 116-112 for the German.

Ali, forced to lose 15 kilos (36 pounds) in two months for the bout, mounted a furious rally in the 12th round. He rocked Röchigian with hard shots, but couldn't knock down the German.

Röchigian, 33, was reduced to countering with his left jab in the later rounds after piling up a big early lead.

"Sometimes when it doesn't work the way you want early, you tighten up," Röchigian said. "He was strong as a bear."

Röchigian, who gained the title two years ago against England's Carl Thompson, said his best moment in the eighth. His stiff left sent Ali flying into the ropes.

Ali, the African champion, now has lost three world title fights. Several hundred Nigerian fans flew in to see the contest.

Röchigian, who earned \$270,000 for the fight, weighed 85.5 kilos (188 pounds), while Ali was at 86.1 kilos (189 pounds).

## Aussie caution for athletes

ATLANTA, July 14: Australian Olympic hopefuls were warned on Saturday they can expect no sympathy if they test positive for even the middles of banned substances at the Atlanta Games, reports Reuters.

Team officials admitted the recent drug furore involving swimmer Samantha Riley and her coach Scott Vokers had been "embarrassing" for Australian sport and are anxious to avoid similar incidents once the Games start.

Riley received a severe caution from swimming's governing body FINA, and Vokers was initially banned for two years after the world champion recorded a positive test in Rio de Janeiro last year.

Vokers confessed to giving Riley a headache tablet from his wife's handbag, a decision he later described as "a moment of panic" but is back coaching in Atlanta after his ban was reduced on appeal to seven months.

"It was an embarrassing moment for Australian sport," said Peter Montgomery, his country's deputy chief of Mission.

"The whole incident demonstrates athletes must take responsibility for their own actions. We have stressed to them they must not take anything without consulting our medical team."

## Costa cruises to coast



GSTAAD, Switzerland, July 14: Alberto Costa won an all-Spanish clay court battle, beating Felix Mantilla 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-1, 6-0 on Sunday to claim the title at the \$60,000-dollar Swiss Open, reports AFP.

Costa, 18th on the ATP Tour computer, added the crown to the one he won at

## A passionate plea

NAIROBI, July 14: A former Kenyan amateur boxer who was African middleweight champion and is now blind after suffering an injury in the ring, has appealed to the international boxing fraternity to come to his aid, reports AFP.

Stephane Moi Kopondo won the gold medal for Kenya in the middleweight division during the 1978 All-Africa Games in Algiers and represented the country in several international tournaments, including the King's Cup, until 1985 when he retired with a detached retina.

The injury has since left Kopondo almost totally blind.

In a letter addressed to the press here on Saturday, Kopondo said he was making the appeal to fellow colleagues internationally. "Because I have become almost a street beggar without anybody caring about me despite numerous appeals."

"I am making the appeal because with three children of school going age, I and my wife are unable to educate them or even afford basic needs for the family, while at the same time we are being evicted... for rent default," he said.



Izzy, the mascot of the Atlanta Olympics, joins spectators at the Centennial Olympic Park on July 13. — AFP/UNB photo