

ATLANTA SNIPPETS

A COSTLY TRIP

ATLANTA, July 17 (Reuters): It costs more than you might think to have a beer at the Olympics.

Official sponsor Budweiser is charging 3 dollars for a glass of draft at its beer garden complex in central Atlanta, but it costs another 2 dollars to make the inevitable trip to the bathroom.

Luxury bathrooms, air-conditioned with sinks' glare, the banners outside the bid world party in central Atlanta. In smaller print they say: "Restroom tickets 2 dollars cash."

A Budweiser spokesman was swift to point out that the bathrooms were not part of their property and the charges were being levied by a canny entrepreneur who had spotted a gap in the market.

RUSSIAN ON THE MAKE

The 1996 Summer Olympics are giving a Russian immigrant turned New York publisher a chance to give away its most cherished product — an almanac of all things American written up in Russian.

Ilya Levkov, head of the Liberty house publishing firm in New York and publisher of the 800-page Russian yellow pages, a sort of Bible for newly arrived Russian immigrants, has sent 500 copies of his book to the Atlanta Olympics to be given to Russian athletes.

The book tells a Russian newcomer all the things he needs to know about America — how to shop, rent a car and place a long-distance telephone call.

It even contains the original contract in which the Russians sold the United States the state of Alaska — instead of leasing it for 99 years as many Russians believe.

The guide also contains a list of Russian communities in the United States. The Russian yellow pages will be given out at the AT and T pavilion global village.

AFRICANS TAKEN ABACK

Athletes from one of Africa's smallest countries have been shocked by the extravagance of the Atlanta Games and horrified by the sight of food being thrown away, their team leader said on Tuesday.

"It is incredible how much food we have seen being thrown away," said Mathunga Jesse, team leader of the small Lesotho delegation. "There are many countries in Africa where you would be killed if you did that."

Jessie said the athletes who make up the southern African country's team nearly all come from humble rural families who make the most of everything they grow and buy.

Yet when they went into the canteen at the Olympic Village, they were aghast at the sight of plates of food going straight into the rubbish bins.

"People eat their dinner, leave food on the table and it is disposed of even though there is nothing wrong with it," he said. "They don't seem to realise that food is useful."

The delegation were equally surprised at the opulence of the buildings. "Since I arrived here, I have been asking myself many questions," Jesse said.

"We have seen these enormous constructions and it seems amazing how much money people have to spend on these things in rich countries, especially when you come from Africa. They just seem to throw money around."

"And it seems they want to go even further, next time they will probably use helicopters in the Village just for the sake of it."

UGANDANS COULDN'T BUY UNDERWEAR

Three members of Uganda's boxing team were arrested on suspicion of trying to pass counterfeit 100 dollars bills, police said on Tuesday.

But police could not confirm press reports that the three were trying to buy women's underwear when detained at the shopping mall in Gainesville, northeast of Atlanta.

A spokesman for Gainesville police named the three as boxers Kizza Bakule Charles and Franco Ogentho and boxing coach Dick Katende.

The three were turned over to the US Secret Service which is now investigating the case, police said.

Drechsler out of the fray?

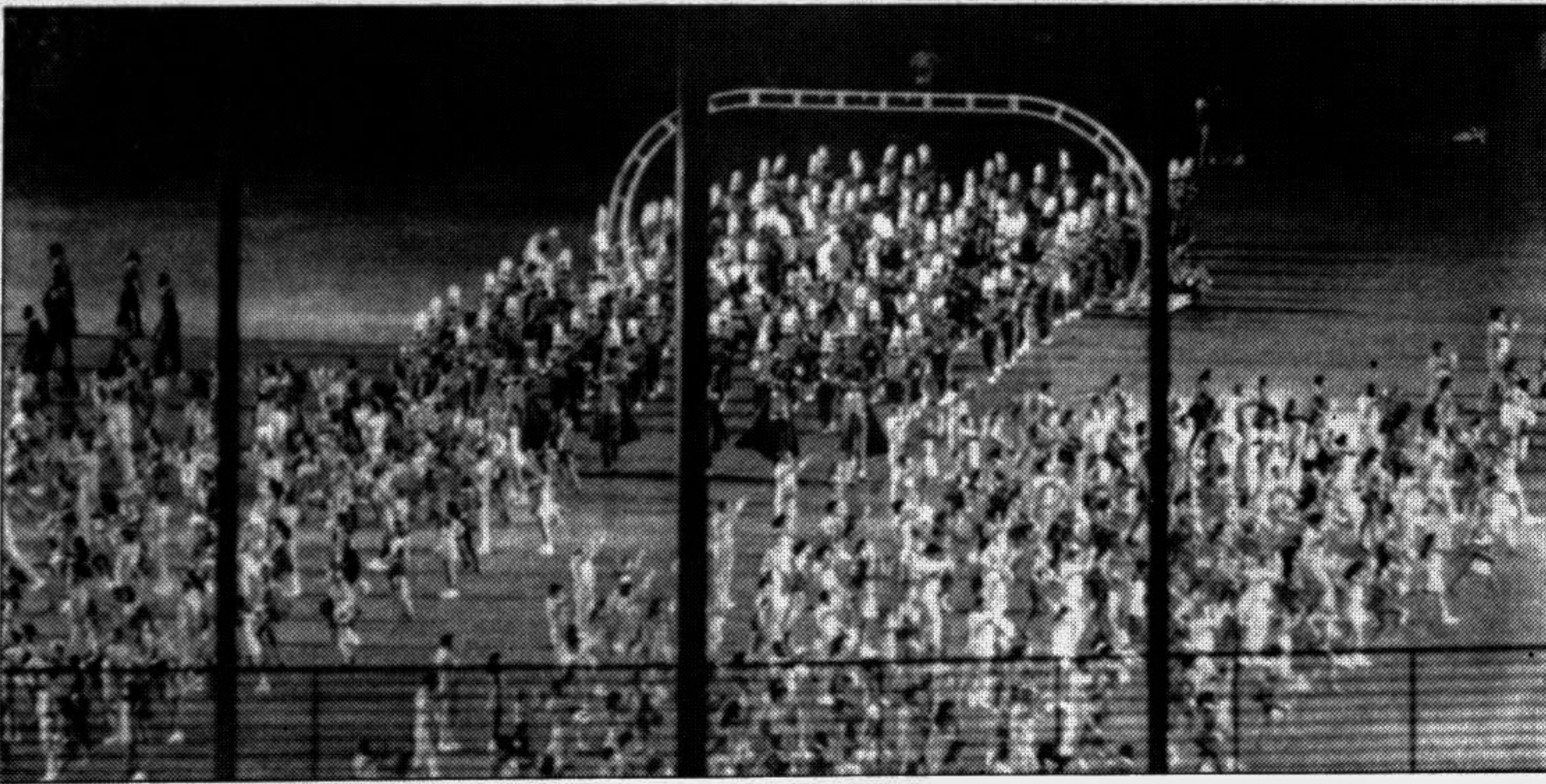
BONN, July 17: German long-jumper Heike Drechsler is definitely out of the Olympic Games in Atlanta according to her manager Michael Mronz.

Mronz told Reuters that a radio interview with Drechsler had been misinterpreted to cast doubt on her announcement on Monday that she had not sufficiently recovered from a knee injury to go to Atlanta.

German media quoted Drechsler as saying, "If I can jump 6.80 or 6.90 metres in training, then I'll go to Atlanta."

But Mronz said only a miracle would allow Drechsler to jump those distances.

"The comments were in response to the question, 'What if you jump 6.80 or 6.90?' he explained. 'Monday's statement remains correct.'"



Participants brushing up their calisthenics in preparation for the inaugural ceremony of the Centennial Games, scheduled for daybreak on July 20 (BST), at Atlanta's Olympic Stadium. — AFP/UNB photo

Hassle in homelessness

ATLANTA, July 17: Almost 10,000 people have been arrested during the past year in a campaign by Atlanta officials to harass the homeless and sweep them off city streets before the Olympic Games, a homeless support group said on Monday, reports Reuters.

The task force for the Homeless said Atlanta police had arrested 9,500 people on charges like walking through parking lots, sitting on curbs, asking for money and sleeping in public. Others had been harassed in other ways, said executive director Anita Beaty.

Many of the homeless are going to be in jail until the Olympics are over, said Joe Beasley, regional director of Japs lead the journey.

ATLANTA, July 17: Japanese tourists are expected to be the largest group of foreign visitors to Atlanta during the Olympic Games, officials said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

But whether the Japanese will be able to order room service in their native language is questionable.

A study of 200 Atlanta hotels and motels, conducted for the Atlanta convention and visitors bureau, showed that the Japanese have reserved 28.1 per cent of available rooms for the Games which open on Friday.

Running second were German tourists, who have reserved 22.8 per cent of hotel rooms, followed by the French with 15.8 per cent, the English with 14 per cent and the Spanish with 10.5 per cent.

The study, by the Atlanta-based Darden Research Corp, showed that Japanese visitors may face a language problem.

the Rainbow Coalition. The city is trying to tell the world "all is well," he said.

Atlanta officials were not immediately available to comment on the latest charges but earlier this year police denied there was any campaign to sweep away the homeless before the Games.

Frederick Lamar, who had a job building Olympics housing, said he spent a weekend in jail after four police officers strip-searched him in the street and charged him with blocking the sidewalk. "I only weigh about 160 pounds (73 kg). I couldn't see it," Lamar said.

According to conservative estimates, the Atlanta metropolitan area has about 55,000 homeless — almost 21,000 of them in the city itself. But there are only 2,386 bed spaces for them in the city, Beaty said.

There are no shelters where the homeless can stay during the day, even if they work at night.

Women and children make up the majority of homeless at a time when the city is losing 5,000 units of public housing because of Olympics-related activity, the task force said.

The Atlanta Union mission built a 100-bed addition to meet the growing demand, but those rooms have been leased by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games to house journalists.

A federal judge last week temporarily struck down a portion of a law targeting the homeless which makes "Acting in a manner not usual for a law-abiding individual" a crime.

The ruling came in a lawsuit filed by seven homeless people which seeks permanently to overturn three laws for being too broad and unconstitutional. Officials were embarrassed earlier this year when it was revealed that authorities had

given homeless people free one-way bus tickets out of town if they promised not to come back.

ID cards for athletes

WASHINGTON, July 17: The State Department will issue over 40,000 "Olympic Identity Cards" to smooth the welcome to the United States for athletes and accredited delegations to the Olympic Games in Atlanta, says a USIS press release.

The new card replaces the traditional visa with a specially designed insert for Olympic delegates' passport. This spring American embassies around the world began placing holographic Olympic Centennial Seals on the travel cards of athletes, coaches and officials of foreign delegations.

The State Department expects to issue over 40,000 cards before the opening ceremony and has designated "Olympic coordinators" at each of its embassies to oversee the process and act as liaison with national Olympic committees.

The Olympic Identity Card will clearly identify official delegations and help process them efficiently at American embassies and through Immigration and Customs at US ports of entry.

State's Visa Office and INS's Forensic Document Lab have collaborated since 1991 to develop the Card's security features. They include intaglio (raised) printing, embedded colour fibres, microprinting, and watermarks that fluoresce under ultraviolet light. Each card and holographic seal is registered and controlled by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games and the American embassy in the delegate's country.

Greeks can't forget that

ATLANTA, July 17: Greek athletes said on Tuesday they were still bitter at the decision to award the 1996 Olympic Games to Atlanta in preference to Athens, despite official comments that disappointment had long been buried, reports Reuters.

"Of course it's wrong. We're celebrating 100 years of the modern Games, so it should have been in Greece," said a track and field athlete who asked not to be named. "But money and fizzy drinks have become more important."

Athens is in the race to host the 2004 Games and Gianna Angelopoulos, president of the committee organising the new bid, said on Friday the resentment had been forgotten and the delegation felt "very comfortable" in Atlanta.

But the athlete and two of his colleagues said most of the Greek delegation did not feel the same way, believing the centenary of the modern event should be held in the country that founded it.

"Most of us are upset. It was in the United States 12 years ago when Los Angeles was host. Why did it have to come back here?"

The Olympic Stadium in Athens was built for genuine Olympic sports. The one here, after the Games, will become a baseball stadium.

"The Games should be held somewhere that is safe. The streets here are dirty, they are dangerous."

The athlete said, the organisers of the Athens bid for the 1996 Games had been too complacent, assuming they would be awarded them by right.

Women on the rise

ATLANTA, July 17: The Centennial Olympics will have a feminine face. IOC officials said Tuesday they had "very encouraging" signs that women athletes would make up a record percentage of the rosters when the Summer Games open Friday, reports AP.

That participation would include women athletes from a number of Muslim countries and nations of the Third World, according to Anita DeFrantz, head of the International Olympic Committee's commission on women.

Organisers predict the number of women athletes in Atlanta would rise by about a third to approximately 3,800, or roughly 40 per cent of the total competitors.

While the rosters won't be complete until Friday, DeFrantz said was pleased by what she saw.

"There is very encouraging news based on initial responses," she said. "Countries that you might think otherwise will have women on their teams."

She said that list included Muslim nations such as Iran, Pakistan, Morocco and Tunisia and emerging nations such as Uganda, Gabon, Mauritania and Sierra Leone.

There are even two all-women teams — from Liechtenstein (two athletes) and Lebanon (one) — and larger teams from Canada that have more women than men.

Last year, the IOC adopted a rule encouraging member Olympic committee to have at least 10 per cent of their decision-making position filled by women by the end of the century.

Pound puts post on line

ATLANTA, July 17: International Olympic Committee marketing chief Dick Pound, a Canadian lawyer, faces a challenge from India's Ashwini Kumar in elections today for a vacant post as IOC vice-president, reports Reuters.

Both men are coming to the end of their four-year terms on the 10-strong executive board but could stay on if they are elected to replace vice-president Kim Un-Young of South Korea, whose term is also expiring.

IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, who has headed the organisation for exactly 16 years, is widely expected to seek another term next year after winning a battle last year to push the age limit up to 78. Samaranch is 76 on Thursday.

An ode to golden oldies

ATLANTA, Georgia, July 17 (AFP): Golden oldies Carl Lewis, Linford Christie, Merlene Ottey and Jackie Joyner-Kersey are back in the blocks, bidding to prove one last time that age is all in the mind.

The mounting evidence suggests, however, that time will tell at Atlanta.

The quartet, of course, have already proved beyond doubt that 30 — sometimes can be competitive at the very highest level.

Christie — already a grandfather — was 32 when he won the 100m gold in Barcelona, making him the oldest-ever winner of the title.

Lewis was 31 as he took the long jump title for the third Olympics in a row, Ottey 35 when she stepped onto the highest steps of the podium at the World Championships at Gothenburg last year.

But a generation gap has begun to appear as the 20 — somethings begin to hit back.

Surely it was no coincidence that Lewis, Christie, Joyner-Kersey as well as German long jumper Heike Drechsler all succumbed to injury at the World Championships last year?

Until 1995, Christie had kept proving his ageing critics wrong — "They say I'm old. Yes, I'm old, but I'm not cold, he delights in crowing — and he had a point.

Research shows that biological age and chronological age can vary. Human beings, quite simply, age at different rates. Some age programmed to live longer.

Lewis underlined the point earlier this season when he argued: "Too much is being made of my age... well hell, I've won eight gold medals — am I really supposed to be like everybody else?"

But the facts also show that the legendary Lewis, extraordinary though he is with eight Olympic and eight World golds to his name, as begun to perform like a mere mortal at last, without a legal sub 10sec 100m to his name for five years.

The statistics, in contrast, indicate Ottey and Joyner-Kersey will remain deadly serious contenders in Atlanta.

Neither is getting any faster or stronger but Ottey points out: "The young ones are still afraid of me. They think of me as a grandmother but that's alright." Gwen Torrence's failure to qualify for the 200m gives the Jamaican the perfect chance to shine again.

The 34-year-old Joyner-Kersey, meanwhile, may be nowhere near the heptathlon records of her youth — her world total of 7,291 points dates back to the Seoul Olympics in 1988 — but neither have her younger rivals threatened to scale those heights.

There are plenty of other well-known faces with over 30 from 220 hours, and German viewers, who can watch the Games on more than one channel, would have 560 hours of programmes to choose from rather than 338.

Games to make a mark

ATLANTA, July 17: The Atlanta Olympics will be the biggest broadcasting event in history, reaching 240 countries and territories, Olympic officials said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

They said TV viewers in Japan would have the most — Japanese stations will be broadcasting 976 hours of Olympic coverage, equivalent to almost six weeks' non-stop viewing, during the 16 days of the Games.

International Olympic Committee marketing chief Dick Pound said Atlanta host broadcasters would be transmitting 3,000 hours of footage, 10 per cent more than was transmitted from Barcelona in 1992.

Public service broadcasters around the world were steadily increasing their coverage. The British Broadcasting Corporation would have 300 hours of Olympic programming, up

from 220 hours, and German viewers, who can watch the Games on more than one channel, would have 560 hours of programmes to choose from rather than 338.

Global television rights for the Atlanta Games were worth more than 900 million dollars, the exact figure was not yet fixed because the IOC did not know how much it could expect from a profit-sharing deal with US network NBC.

That compared with a figure of around 600 million dollars for the Barcelona Games. Atlanta organisers will receive about 550 million dollars, with the rest shared between the IOC, national Olympic committees and international sports federations.

With the exception of South Africa, sub-Saharan African countries were the only countries not paying for broadcast rights. In fact, Pound said, the IOC was giving them financial help preparing their pro-

candles on their birthday cakes who will compete at the Games.

Barcelona bronze medalist Johnny Gray, at 36, won the 800m in the US trials to make it to Atlanta, exclaiming: "I couldn't have a dream as good as that. I don't know if I'm related to wine, but at 36."

Mary Slaney, meanwhile — who won her first US title 22 years and was one of the greats of her era despite never winning an Olympic title — is also back after winning selection for the 5,000m.

But there is no one to match the longevity of British javelin thrower Tessa Sanderson, the 1984 Olympic victor.

Persuaded to try and make her fifth Olympics to raise money for a children's charity, the 40-year-old came out of a four-year retirement to throw 66.44 — the Olympic qualifying mark — with her very first competitive throw.

In the end, however, there can be only one winner of the generation game — and he has a scythe to back up his argument.

Ask Russians Lyubo Gurina and Yekaterina Podkopayeva. Gurina made history by winning the European 800m title at the age of 37, while her teammate outdid her by snatching the world indoor 1500m gold at the age of 40.

Neither, however, made it to Atlanta. All good things, it seems, must come to an end.

The IOC has already signed deals with NBC, the European Broadcasting Union and other broadcasters for the rights to successive Games up to 2008, guaranteeing TV revenues until then of more than 5.5 billion dollars.

He said that meant the IOC could sell potential Summer Olympic hosts, including the 11 cities bidding for the 2004 Games, that they could rely on revenues of around 1.3 billion dollars from television rights, international and national sponsorship deals.

The Atlanta Games, the biggest yet, have a 1.7 billion budget, all of it financed through the private sector and marketing deals.

It's our view that you'd have to be quite inept not to be able to organise Games for 1.3 billion dollars, especially if you don't have to build anything," Pound said.

Opening of old wounds

JERUSALEM, July 17: Only days from the launch of the Olympic Games in Atlanta, a fresh debate was sparked between Israel and Germany Tuesday over who was to blame for the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes by Palestinians at the 1972 Munich Games, reports AFP.

Former intelligence chief Zvi Zamir blamed Germany for trying to "cover up the shameful failure" of Bavarian police to free the athletes taken hostage by a commando unit from the Black September organisation.

Zamir, who witnessed the failed bid to free the hostages, said the whole German operation was "the worst negligence I have ever seen in my life."

He was reacting to an investigation shown on German television Monday which said Israel had to shoulder the blame for the athletes' deaths.

The report accused the then Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir of refusing to sign an deal struck between the West German government and the Egyptian government and the kidnappers.

Under the deal, the hostages and the kidnappers would have been taken by German Air Force plane to Cairo and the athletes would then have flown home to Israel while the Palestinian

commandos would have gone free.

After Meir rejected the compromise, former German Chancellor Willy Brandt ordered the Bavarian border guards to free the hostages.

However, Zamir countered that as soon as reports of the kidnapping reached Jerusalem, this Israeli government had urged Brandt to allow an Israeli Army crack team to work to free the hostages.

But "the German government was not prepared to let a Tshah unit operate on German soil," Zamir told Israeli radio.

"As the Israel government stuck to its principles of never giving in to blackmail, it agreed to Brandt's decision against its better judgement."

Zamir said he had had no knowledge of the deal reported by the first German channel.

"I took part in consultations with the German ministers and the chief of police. Nobody mentioned this compromise proposal," said the former Mossad chief.

He strongly criticised the German operation to free the hostages which took place at Munich airport saying it "was a shameful failure that the investigation has tried to cover up by throwing the ball back into Golda Meir's court."

The border guards ordered to free the hostages were "inexperienced and incapable of carrying out such a mission."

He said the former West German interior minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher refused to bring in a special army unit because it would have been "contrary to the constitution of Bavaria."

"The police charged with capturing the two kidnappers who were to deliver the hostages safe and sound, refused to carry out the order."

"The Germans were solely motivated by the desire to ensure the Games continued," he added. The radio commentator said it was the first time that any Israeli leader had so directly blamed Germany for the athletes' deaths.

However, a spokesman for the German embassy in Tel Aviv refused to be drawn into the debate saying it was "an internal Israeli affair."

The Palestinians are fielding their first team to the Atlanta Games which are due to open on Friday, aiming to put behind the memories of the 1972 massacre.

But Israel has complained to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that the three Palestinian athletes and a handful of accompanying officials, will be allowed to compete under the name of Palestine.

Their protest was rejected late Monday by the IOC.

The caring Village clinic

ATLANTA, July 17 (Reuters): Some athletes at the Olympic Village certainly are having fun — the pharmacy has to keep filling bowls of free condoms.

"I think people are here to spread goodwill. The world is a friendly place," said Dr S Boyd Eaton, director of the Village's free clinic that cares for 10,000 athletes at the Centenary Games in Atlanta.

"Let's hear it for safe sex. We are proponents who you are too," said the director of the clinic whose pharmacy keeps replenishing the bowls of complimentary condoms it puts out.

Medical opinion is divided on whether a little of what comes naturally is beneficial in the build-up to competition.

Atlanta psychiatrist Dr Jeff Minassian said: "For some people, going through some sex before an event might actually be helpful with respect to self-confidence. But there's some drive that might be taken away by that release."

An international survey by the British condom maker Durex showed that Thai and South Africans believe that sex and sport don't mix while "those in Spain, Mexico and Germany will be encouraging their sportsmen and women to indulge a little."

Eaton's 400-strong staff at the clinic, grappling with a host of languages in this medical tower of Babel, deal with everything from Third World athletes seeking the luxury of dental hygiene to pregnant sports officials.

They are helped by a special speaker phone laid on by the organisers in 31 languages from Swahili to Hindi.

"Somebody will come through on the line when you punch a language number. I was worried translation of medical terms would be difficult but it has worked beautifully," Eaton said.

Athletes wanting to combat their hay fever or headache worry constantly that the drugs may contain a banned substance.

But the clinic has a special hotline set up by a local university which can check on medicines around the world.

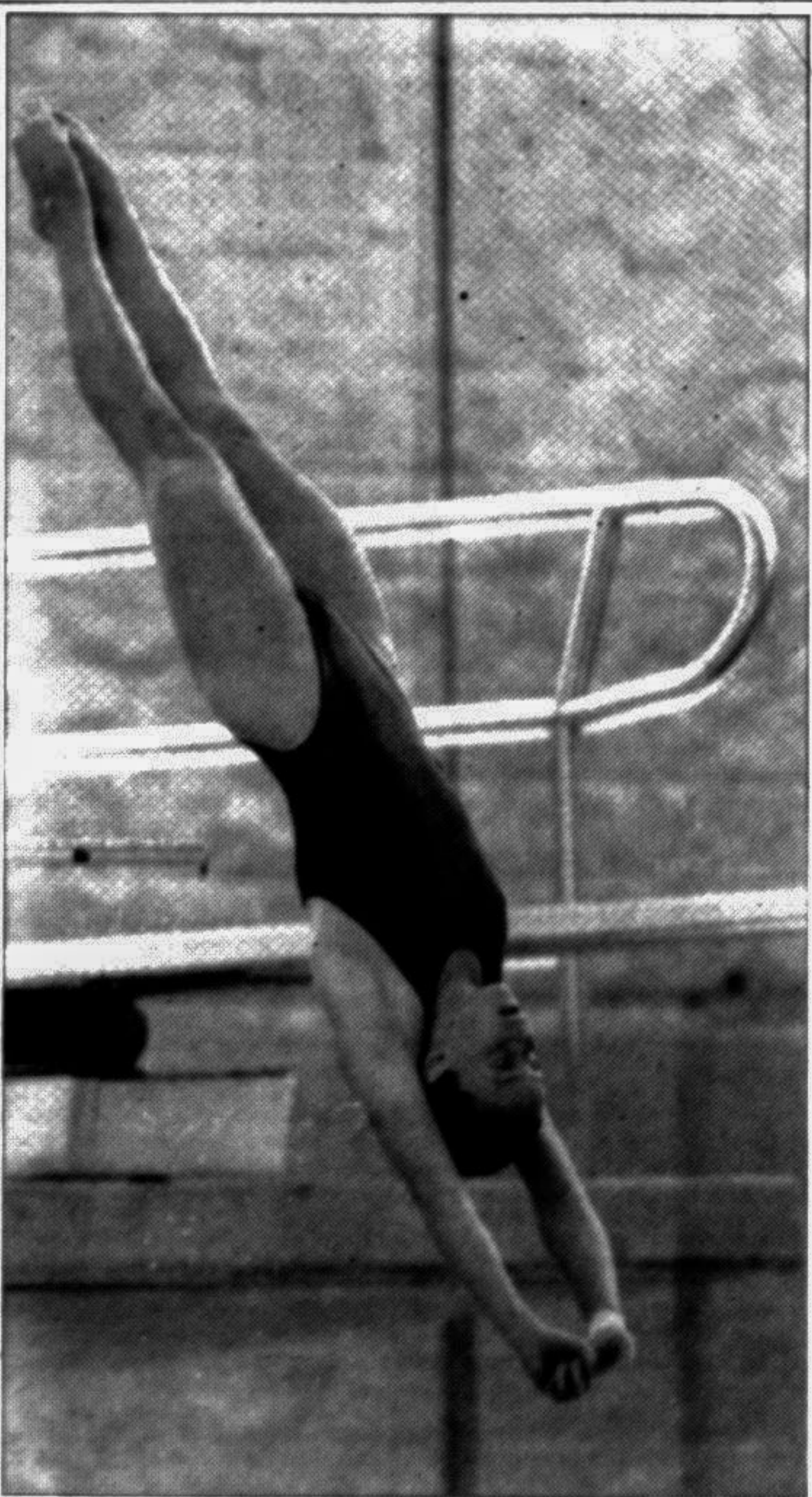
"We are very aware of the potential risk of giving drugs that are banned," Eaton said. Some athletes are over-cautious. "One athlete came in

with some pills and said he had been told they were a performance enhancer. They turned out to be multi-vitamins.

Isolated cases of food poisoning are carefully checked out to ensure there is no threat of an epidemic reported that the athletes were bearing

up well under the stifling humidity of the city dubbed "Hotlanta"

Eaton is dazzled by his surroundings. "Watching the incredibly panoply of human beings going by. They are such beautiful people, it is mind-boggling. This has been a fantastically uplifting experience."



Canadian diver Annie Pelletier sharpens her skill during the training at the Georgia Aquatic centre in Atlanta on July 16. — AFP/UNB photo

Soccer's new dawn rising in the East

ALL soccer eyes have been on the European Championships as national teams fight it out for the continental crown, but when England coach Terry Venables thinks about the game's future, he sees huge potential in Asia.

"China and Japan will be major powers by 2002," he said in Beijing recently.

The Chinese players are technically fast and physically powerful enough, and it's really now just a question of how to pace their game."

Soccer is now the most popular spectator sport in China. Ma Kejian, director of the Chinese Football Association, says: "We have made a lot of progress since we started up a professional league in 1994. But our priority now is to improve on the international scene."

Few would bet against them achieving that goal.

Long before football's world governing body, FIFA, stunned everyone by announcing that Japan and South Korea would jointly host the 2002 World Cup finals, many pundits felt that Asia — expanding rapidly economically — could be the game's next big growth area.

Apart from the political factors that always play a role in such decisions, FIFA's announcement was a tribute to two technically brilliant bids, and the absence of any other competitor was tacit acceptance that Asia's time in soccer has come.

Professional leagues are now well established in most East Asian countries, playing standards have risen rapidly, and, as with the economic miracle, over-heating appears the only danger.

Rows over the sudden influx of money into the game have already erupted in China's fledgling professional league, and local players in Japan are intensely jealous of the huge wage packets paid to the ageing foreign mercenaries who are seen as using the J-League as a pension fund.

But China and Japan are young innocents on the football scene compared with Malaysia, where a recent match-fixing scandal offers a stark warning on how quickly the rot can set in.

With no less than a third of its professional players serving suspensions for alleged involvement in the scandal, it is not surprising that the quality

of the national league has dropped dramatically and that the national side is in disarray.

Despite a massive crackdown on corruption, rumours are rife that the fixers have resurfaced.

Singapore, which withdrew from the Malaysian league and has formed its own, it wary of following the same path, and is looking into the prospects of using the proceeds of legalised betting to help finance its bold new venture.

Thailand and Indonesia have also suffered the ravages of match rigging, and throughout southeast Asia, gambling is the biggest of the many ancillary industries that the game has sprouted. In Thailand, more than \$2 billion was spent last year, while in Malaysia it was the bookmakers who brought the game to its knees.

South Korea — which has reached three out of the last four World Cup finals — has escaped the impact of the bookies, as have China and Japan. But they would do well to heed the lessons of the lesser Asian tigers.

Gemini News

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