

LIVE ON PHILIPS TV

Atlanta 1996

Let's make things better.

PHILIPS

ATLANTA SNIPPETS

DRASTIC MEASURES
Some athletes are finding the air-conditioning so fierce in their rooms at the Olympic Village they have taken drastic measures to stay warm despite searing temperatures outdoors.

British boxing coach Ian Irwin, watching his two fighters working up a healthy sweat in the gym on Thursday, said some of his country's swimmers were forced to wear tracksuits to bed.

HEAVIEST OLYMPIAN
American weightlifter Mark Henry on Thursday laid claim to be the heaviest athlete at the Atlanta Olympics after tipping the scales at a massive 414 pounds (188 kg).

Officials said Henry's weight — it has been steadily climbing since the 1993 World Championships — was an international record for the heaviest Olympian ever.

COSMOPOLITE GERMANY
Germany's squad is the most cosmopolitan at the Atlanta Olympics — its 480 members include athletes born in 21 different countries.

They range from Poland through the Ivory Coast to Mexico and Azerbaijan. The figure does not include athletes from the former East Germany.

CRACKDOWN ON PROSTITUTES
Atlanta's police chief on Thursday promised to clamp down on prostitutes tempted to ply their trade at the Centennial Olympics.

"Where it pops up, we will deal with it aggressively," said Beverly Harward, the first black woman to be made chief of police in a major US city.

"Our big problem is not escort services but streetwalkers," she said as Atlanta welcomed two million visitors for the world's largest sporting event.

As one of the south's leading convention centres, Atlanta is well used to dealing with an influx of visitors and the inevitable attentions they might receive from the world's oldest profession.

But Harward said there were no signs as yet of a major influx of prostitutes into Atlanta for the games.

"We have not to my knowledge made any arrests of town prostitutes. We are basically dealing with the same people that are already here," she said in an interview.

Atlanta is known as the flesh capital of the US south because of its 60 all-nude bars and strip clubs where scores of tabletop dancers gyrate naked before many a glass-eyed customer.

In a town where evening entertainment options are severely limited, the dancers are hoping the Olympics will offer a summer bonanza.

"I'm really excited about the Olympics. I'm looking forward to meeting people from all over the world," said tale top dancer Kim at the Cheateh, one the city's oldest clubs.

Americans in a stew

ATLANTA, July 19: American attempts to draft Todd Martin into their Olympic tennis squad ended in failure on Thursday, forcing doubles specialist Richey Reneberg to fill the gap left by injured world number one Pete Sampras, reports Reuter.

Following Sampras' withdrawal on Monday, US team officials had been hoping the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the IOC would agree to Martin, a semifinalist at Wimbledon this month, as a replacement.

Their request, however, fell on stony ground, ITF officials pointed out that Martin was not included on the original list of nominated players and, as such, was ineligible to compete.

Martin ironically turned down an earlier invitation to represent his country in the doubles, citing personal reasons, but subsequently told team coach Tom Gullikson he was prepared to take part.

Gullikson said earlier on Thursday that Martin was "waiting and expecting a call," a statement which left the ITF unimpressed. "The US team do not make the decision, we do," said an ITF spokeswoman.

Reneberg will join Andre Agassi and Malivi Washington as the US men's singles representatives. He will also team up with Washington in the doubles, in contrast to the US women's team who were given special dispensation to boost their squad.

Mary Joe Fernandez, originally omitted from the squad, was belatedly given the chance to defend her doubles title after leading players appealed to the ITF on her behalf.

The Olympic tennis event has already suffered a double blow with the withdrawal of both Sampras (strained achilles) and women's number one Steffi Graf (knee), who received some sympathetic words from US women's coach Billie Jean King.

"I feel Steffi's under a lot of pressure, particularly with the trial of her father coming up in September," said King.

"I hope her life eventually becomes more serene and stable because she certainly has a lot of distractions, but I've always felt the tennis court has actually helped her have some sanctuary in her life."

In contrast, Monica Seles, a year after returning to the game following her on-court stabbing in Hamburg in 1993, will be spearheading the American women's team despite a persistent shoulder injury.

"I can't wait for it to start," she said, confirming she would be staying in the athletes Village. "I've been looking forward to this for more than a year and a half."

Agassi, though, has decided to stay outside the Village and is determined not to let the tight security surrounding the Games venues affect him.

"To be honest, you can drive yourself nuts thinking about it ... you can lose touch quite quickly with reality," he said.

"I choose to subscribe to the 'lot of athletes' theory, namely there are a lot of athletes and what are the chances of something happening to me?"

"Obviously it is a tragedy if it happens, but thinking about it can be a snowball effect which can only hurt your lifestyle and certainly your competition."

Agassi is following in the footsteps of his father Mike who was a member of the Iranian boxing team at the 1948 and 1952 Olympics.

"My father is probably as proud, if not prouder, of me being here for the Olympics than anything I've accomplished so far."

Samaranch sympathises

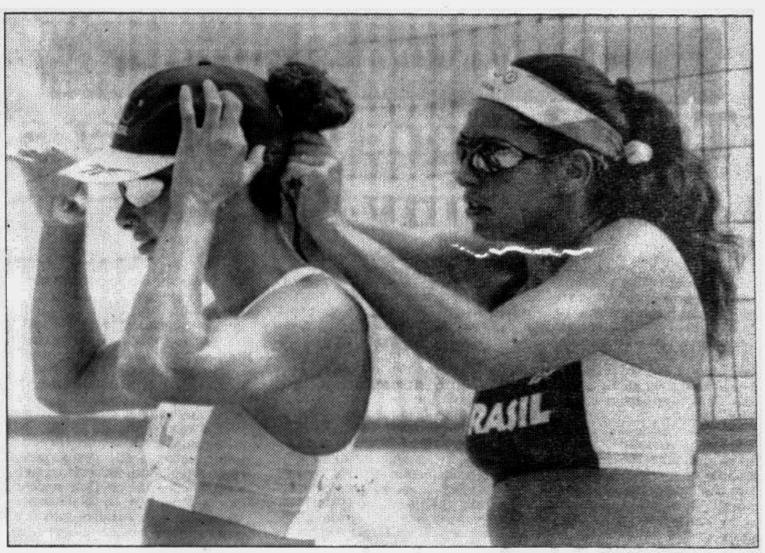
ATLANTA, July 19: Olympic chief Juan Antonio Samaranch sent a letter of sympathy to US President Bill Clinton on Thursday to express the Olympic Movement's sorrow after the crash of a TWA Jumbo jet near New York, reports Reuter.

"It is with deep sorrow that we learned of the tragic crash of TWA flight 80 last night," Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, told Clinton.

"The entire Olympic Movement gathered in Atlanta joins me in sending to you, to the American people and to the bereaved families the expression of our deepest sympathy."

The Boeing 747 jet, bound for Paris, exploded in a fireball over the Atlantic Ocean on Wednesday evening, killing 228 people and provoking a security review in Atlanta before Friday's Olympic opening ceremony.

IOC officials said Samaranch was sending similar letters to the TWA airline, to Atlanta Games organisers and to the US Olympic Committee.



Brazilian beach volleyballer Monica Rodriguez (R) helps her team-mate Adriana Samuel before a training session in Atlanta beach on July 18. — UNB/AFP photo

Shahbaz recalled

ISLAMABAD, July 19: Former captain Shahbaz Ahmed was reinstated to the Pakistan hockey team on Thursday in a bid to boost the country's hopes for a medal in Atlanta, reports Reuter.

Pakistan Hockey Federation



(PHF) secretary Mudassar Asghar, quoted by the official AFP news agency, said Shahbaz, one of the best strikers in the world, had settled his differences with the PHF and would go to Atlanta today to join the team.

Asghar said he hoped hockey tournament directors would permit Shahbaz's inclusion in the 16-man squad at his late stage.

"Meeting with Shahbaz gave me the impression that he wants to serve the hockey team at Atlanta as a player without any condition and it is a good sign," he said.

But Asghar said the player had not agreed to join the team unconditionally.

Shahbaz, who led Pakistan in the Barcelona Olympics and to the gold medal at the 1994 World Cup in Sydney, had refused to play under a new captain, goalkeeper Mansoor Ahmed, after leading a revolt against team management two months ago.

Boxing stands on trial

Barcelona four years ago and a commitment by IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch that the sport would be in the Olympics at least through Sydney.

"If we have a repeat of Seoul, the IOC is going to throw us out," said USA Boxing president Jerry Dusenberry. "We want a fair Games this time around."

Though criticism of the computer scoring system remains, it did cut down on questionable decisions in Barcelona despite some puzzling decisions that saw fighters who might have thrown several hundred punches in three rounds credited with only a handful of scoring blows.

The five judges who record the blows by punching buttons at ringside are still human, and still subject to the scoring whims that have in the past afflicted sports like gymnastics and figure skating.

That has American fighters concerned, despite an intensive training camp that stressed using such techniques as jabs and straight punches that the judges tend to see better.

"We're known for getting screwed in the Olympics," said Floyd Mayweather, an American in the 125-pound (57-kilogram) division.

Probably more troubling for boxers whose professional futures may depend on a medal in these Games is the lack of television coverage for a sport that long has had a high Olympic profile.

NBC decided to televise boxing only in non-prime-time hours and mostly on a delayed basis. Network officials said this was an effort to lure large numbers of female viewers with such sports as gymnastics and swimming.

"It's really a shame with the stories and characters we have on the team and the way we all got here," said US light heavyweight Antonio Tarver. "This team is the Cinderella story of the '96 Olympic Games. Unfortunately, you're going to have to read about it since they decided not to show it on television."

Like previous American teams, this year's squad features young fighters mostly from inner cities who are trying to use the Olympic spotlight as a springboard to professional rings.

And, like previous American teams, it has an assortment of boxers who have had some problems in the past. Two team members have faced charges they assaulted women, while heavyweight Nate Jones was in prison on an auto theft charge during the last Olympics.

"I think people need to know that Nate Joneses, the Antonio Tarvers and the Fernando Vargases of the world," said Tarver, himself a former crack cocaine addict. "We're the last truly amateur sport left in these Games. We're trying to win back some of the fans of this sport."

Darling, dynamic Dominique

ATLANTA, July 19: The Olympic Games will crown a new gymnastics darling in Atlanta, with 14-year-old American Dominique Moceanu a bubbly candidate to win both hearts and glory in the showdown that begins this weekend, reports Reuter.

Moceanu hopes to follow the path of her coach Bela Karolyi's other famous Olympic champions — Nadia Comaneci and Mary Lou Retton — but must overcome a star-studded field that promises a riveting, wide open competition.

The hoopla surrounding the dynamic Moceanu, who became the youngest US national champion last year at 13, has even overshadowed teammate Shannon Miller, who took silver overall in Barcelona in a five-medal haul.

World champion Lilia Podhopyayeva of Ukraine, China's Mo Huan, Svetlana Khorkina of Russia and Romanian Lavinia Milosovic are also among contenders to succeed Tatiana Gutsu of Ukraine, who won for the unified CIS team four years ago.

The men's competition, which begins on Saturday, is more focused, with China's all-around world champion Xiao Shuang poised to supplant Barcelona's big winner, Vitaly Scherbo of Belarus, as gymnastics king.

Scherbo reigned supreme in 1992, setting an Olympic gymnastics record by winning six golds — adding still rings, pommel horse, vault and parallel bars titles to his team and all-around triumphs.

Li, who became China's first gymnastics world champion last year at Sabae, Japan, is full of confidence despite the presence of Scherbo and Russians Alexei Nemov and Alexei Voropaev among others.

"Nemov's not bad. Scherbo's not bad," Li said after practice in the Georgia dome. "But I'm sure I'm the best."

Scherbo and Li have developed a rivalry since the Chinese suggested Scherbo was not a primary threat in the all-around because of a weakness in the rings and a tendency to carry excess weight.



Shooter Lida Fariman, Iran's first women athlete to take part in the Olympic Games since the 1979 Islamic revolution, seen along with her compatriots during the Iranian flag raising ceremony at the Atlanta Olympic Village on July 18. — UNB/AFP photo

Muster in qtrs

STUTTGART, July 19: Thomas Muster polished off his second Spanish opponent of the week here Thursday and looked forward to his third at the one million-dollar Mercedes Open, reports AFP.

The top seed and world number two dispatched teenage talent Gala Blanco 6-3, 6-0 for a quarter-final place at the Weissenhof Club in 54 minutes as world number 100 Blanco went the same way as compatriot Marcos Gorri. Muster's previous victim here.

Former French Open champion Muster will go for his Spanish hattrick today against number eight seed Francisco Clavet, who beat Swede Magnus Gustafsson 6-3, 6-1.

Second seed and current French Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia, ousted Sweden's Mivael Tillstrom, a third-round finisher at both Roland Garros and Wimbledon in recent weeks, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5).

Afterwards, Muster, back in competition after a left thigh injury kept him out of Wimbledon, said he was pleased with his progress.

"I found my rhythm in the second set," he said. "I started hitting a better percentage of first serves and had more winners. It was a good match."

Russian Alexander Volkov piled on more gloom for the Swedes, easing past veteran Swede Stefan Edberg.

Fourth seed Edberg, still suffering from last weekend's groin strain, briefly excited the crowd by taking the first set and later saving three match points after being broken for 3-4 in the final set.

But he eventually succumbed in three sets as Volkov came through 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

"I didn't even know if I would be able to play here," said Edberg, who Thursday competed in the final claycourt match of his career.

THE OLYMPIC NOTEBOOK

ATLANTA, July 19 (AP): Olympic diary on Friday:

ALL BUT TWO ARRIVE
All but two of the 197 delegations scheduled to compete in the Atlanta Games have arrived, IOC officials said.

Teams from Turkmenistan, Guinea Bissau and Sudan arrived Thursday. Only Laos and Burma were missing and they were expected by Friday.

For the first time in history, all nations affiliated to the International Olympic Committee accepted invitations to take part in the Games.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER
Somewhere in Atlanta, about 2,000 happy people are making last-minute plans to attend Friday night's opening ceremony at the Olympics.

The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games put the most-sought-after seats on sale Thursday. Some were leftovers from a previous release, but the committee said most were seats organisers found they did not need for logistical purposes during two rehearsals this week.

The original allotment of public seats for the ceremony in the 83,000-seat Olympic Stadium were among the first to sell out.

The tickets were in three price ranges — 212 dollars, 424 and 636 each — and were available only to walk-in buyers at the main ticket centre in Atlanta.

INFORMAL PROTEST
The French may be known for high fashion, but six officials plan to march in Friday's opening ceremony of the Centennial Olympics in training outfits rather than official uniforms.

The dressing down will be in protest of planned government cuts in the national sports department, said French delegation leader Pierre Albric.

"It is totally outlawed by the International Olympic Committee," Albric said. "It will stand out."

He said the six officials would parade just behind flag-bearer Marie-Jose Perec, the 400 metre runner.

The protest follows a letter from the Finance Ministry announcing cuts to the 1,500-strong technical staff that makes up the backbone of French sporting organizations.

In the past decade, the technical staff already had been reduced by 1,000 positions.

FINANCIAL KNOCKOUT
A businessman scored a financial knockout over former heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield with a winning bid of 32,500 dollars for Olympic T-shirt number 001.

It was the last of the special shirts which, for the past 500 days, have counted down the days to the Games that begin Friday.

"Carl Bouckaert won the shirt after some spirited bidding against Holyfield, the 1984 Olympic bronze medalist.

Holyfield bid from the stage at Centennial Olympic Park in downtown Atlanta, where he stood alongside IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch and Kevin Young, 1992 gold medalist in the 400-meter hurdles. Samaranch and Young did not bid.

"Where's the guy that's bidding?" Holyfield asked the auctioneer as the bidding reached a conclusion before an excited, sun-baked crowd.

"You want it? Do you really want it?" he asked Bouckaert. Holyfield let Bouckaert have the shirt, after Bouckaert raised the bid by dollars 500 to the final figure.

Bouckaert, who moved to Georgia from Belgium in 1978, said he will display the shirt in a glass case in his office, the official carpet supplier for the games.

The auctions have raised more than dollars 815,000 since they began on March 7, 1995. The money is being used in various ways, including Olympic tickets for poor children and for Olympic Aid-Atlanta, a programme for children in war-torn countries.

A new T-shirt auction will be conducted every night of the games, with that money also earmarked for Olympic Aid-Atlanta.

IGF EXPANDS
Sport aerobics, acrobatics and the trampoline have gained some formal recognition from the International Gymnastics Federation.

The world governing body for gymnastics made sport aerobics part of the federation Thursday and gave preliminary approval to acrobatics and the trampoline with a final decision due in two years.

"They wanted to get into the Olympic Games ... and the only way into the Olympics was through a major federation," said Jim Barry, the federation vice president. "To me, it's an extension of the sport. If we're going to compete as a sport along with soccer and track and field, we've got to grow."

Federation officials also announced changes in the team format next year. There will be six-person teams, instead of the current seven, with five competing in each event. The four highest scores will be counted, instead of the current five.

REID'S RELIEF
Domestic assault and battery charges against US boxer David Reid have been dropped two days before the opening of the Olympic boxing competition.

"I feel like I have a piano off my back," Reid said during a US team training session. "I was innocent all along. Now I don't have to worry about going to court while I'm boxing in the Olympics."

Reid, who boxes in the 71 kilogram (156-pound) weight division, was accused of assaulting a lady friend in his motel room at Orlando, Florida, where the US team was taking a week's break from training and was making personal appearances.

A Russian submariner

WIESBADEN, July 19: Players from South and Latin America take pride's place among the list released here on Thursday, of the ten highest scorers in international football so far this year, reports AFP.

The International Football Federation of History and Statistics (IFFHS) placed Colombian Antony de Avila on top with 12 goals scored in matches against national teams while playing for his country or his club America Cali.

Last year's overall highest goalscorer, German captain Juergen Klinsmann, is the only European to make the top ten. He lies in second place with 10 goals.

Behind him are Hernan Jorge Crespo (Argentina) also with 10 goals, Russell Latapy (Trinidad and Tobago), Keith Gumbs (St-Kitts and Nevis), Marcelo Salas (Chili) — all with nine goals — Abdel Sellimi (Tunisia), Eduardo Hrtado (Ecuador), Ivan Ene Valenciano (Colombia) and Octavio Santana (Honduras), with seven goals apiece.

But strong challengers have surfaced this year, most notably Australians Scott Miller in the 100 and Scott Goodman in the 200.

"To win it will be necessary to beat the world records," Pankratov, 22-year-old son of a tractor factory worker, said on Thursday. Spitz took both titles at the 1972 Munich Games.

But Pankratov declined to identify the Australians as exclusive dangers.

"All those in the finals will be the main threat," he said.

ATLANTA, July 19: Denis Pankratov, Russia's spectacular submarine swimmer, expects he will have to beat his own world records to become the first man since Mark Spitz to win both Olympic butterfly titles at a single Games, reports Reuter.

The Russian has established himself as the foremost butterfly swimmer in the past two years, winning the world 200 metres title in 1994 and setting world records at both 100 and 200 metres last year.

He took the stroke into new realms at the European Championships in Vienna last August, swimming over half the first length of the 50-metre pool under water on his way to slicing more than half a second from the 100 butterfly world record set by American Pablo Morales nine years previously.

"We have ongoing conversations with the IAAF. We would prefer that Michael Johnson ran at 9 pm rather than at 8 pm because it enhances our prime time telecast and makes it available to the biggest possible audience," said NBC vice-president Ed Markey.

IAAF spokesman Georgio Reiner added: "We agreed to this to help give the sport more exposure in the United States and a better chance for the American public to see Michael Johnson."

holder's results had not been that good for the past two years.

World records are a sensitive subject for the blond Russian since he was denied the world short-course 100 and 200 butterfly marks in Paris in February because the organisers had run out of bottles to carry out the required dope tests.

"That was unacceptable," said Pankratov, whose words were translated by an interpreter.

Pankratov has undergone plenty of dope tests since the French fiasco. He said he had done eight in the past month, four at competition venues and four at training camps.

Pankratov, sporting facial stubble before he shaves down fully on the eve of his first race, arrived in Atlanta on Wednesday following a few days training at the University of South Carolina.

This year was pretty difficult, pretty exhausting. But I think my overall condition is the best it's ever been," he said.

Pankratov reckons to swim the first 25 metres of the 100 event under water, the distance depending on his overall fitness and his feeling in the water.

He does not anticipate that world swimming's governing body FINA will go as far as they did in backstroke following the immense submarine starts of the 1988 metres and subsequently 15.

"Twenty-five metres is exactly enough for me," he said. "If that is the limit that will still be in my range."

South Americans in top ten

WASHINGTON, July 19: Scheduled third-round play at the Legg Mason Classic men's tennis tournament was washed out by rain on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Seventh-seeded Dutchman Paul Haarhuis and eighth seed Renzo Furlan of Italy had each won first-set tie-breaks and were early in their second sets when the rain began. The rest of Thursday's programme never got started.

Rain the spoiler

Scherbo, 24, still looks slightly pudgy and his practices have been less than inspiring. But the charismatic defending champion always saves his best for when it counts.

Scherbo looks a little overweight, but that's Vitaly's said sidelined teammate Ivan Ivanov, the 1994 world champion whose Olympic dream was reeked by a torn achilles tendon earlier this month.