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## Nigeria now on the map



dogged by administrative chaos.

For the second time in four days — Nigeria beat Brazil 4-3 in their semifinal on Wednesday — the African South American clash produced captivating soccer.

Lopez struck in the second minute, heading in a cross from Crespo but Nigeria, had the better of the first half thanks to inspired play from Augustine Okocha and Nwankwo Kanu, two goals here against Brazil.

The Argentine defence which hardly broke sweat in keeping clean sheets against European opposition in their previous two games, was repeatedly ripped apart by the Africans' quick passing and trickery.

One move led to Amokachi hitting the post before Babayaro equalised, rising at the far post to head following a free-kick in the 28th minute.

Argentina, traditionally known for the more sinister aspects of their game, were also inventive, with midfielders Ariel Ortega and Hugo Morales causing constant problems for Nigeria.

The teams continued to defy sweltering conditions after halftime.

In the 50th minute, Ariel Ortega, who has been booked for diving in the Argentine Championship appeared to fall over in the penalty area but referee Pierluigi Collina of Italy

gave a penalty against Taribo West.

Crespo converted for his sixth goal of the tournament, which left him joint top scorer with Brazil's Bebeto.

But Nigeria kept attacking and after forcing goalkeeper Pablo Cavallo to make several difficult saves, Amokachi equalised.

However, Argentina, often seen as the villains of international soccer, won the fair play award at the Olympic tournament, organisers said on Saturday.

The South Americans received the accolade after accumulating the lowest number of yellow and red cards per game.

Over the years Argentine soccer has gained a reputation for violence, petulance and ungentlemanly tactics.

But coach Passarella symbolised the new look Argentina after his team was beaten by a controversial last minute goal.

Instead of the "we were robbed" rhetoric he launched into after another controversial defeat last year by Brazil, in philosophical mood. Passarella, captain of Argentina's World Cup winning side in 1978, talked about the pain of losing.

Football has given me more sadness than happiness. I had the fortune to be a successful player but I remember the bitterness of the defeats much more than the happiness of the wins.



AFTER BRAZIL, ARGENTINA WHO? Lanky Nigerians celebrate Africa's first Olympic soccer gold after Argentina became the latest victim of their "never die" brand of football in the Olympic soccer final at the Sanford Stadium on August 3.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Dawning after darkness

LAGOS, Aug 4. Nigeria's military government declared Monday a public holiday to celebrate a historic gold medal won by the troubled African nation in the Olympic Games soccer event, reports Reuter.

Ecstasy filled the land moments after the final whistle of the match as thousands of people poured on to the streets of Lagos to savour the 3-2 defeat of Argentina on Saturday.

State radio and Nigerian newspapers reported similar celebration throughout the vast nation of 100 million people.

"Nigeria rules the world," "Golden Nigeria," were some of the headlines that fronted opposition and government newspapers alike.

"Nothing unites this nation like football does," said veteran television sports commentator Hammed Adio.

The head of state General Sani Abacha is overwhelmed by the great performance of our boys," interior minister Babagana Kingibe said today on state television in the capital Abuja when he announced Abacha's decision to call a public holiday.

Abacha stands to benefit from the soccer triumph that he can hold up as a major achievement despite Nigeria's political crisis.

His government is also bound to use the soccer gold to try to launder the image of a nation scared internationally over human rights abuses and lack of democracy.

Television viewers around the globe will say amen to that after watching the west Africans score twice in the last 16 minutes to pull off a breathtaking 3-2 win over Argentina.

However, it was the second famous South American scalp in three days for Nigeria following their epic 4-3 win over four-times world champions Brazil in the semifinal on Wednesday.

Dutchman Bonfrere, reappointed coach in May five weeks after walking out of the job in a row over money and political meddling, said a post-

itive style suited him and his players.

"I was an attacking player and I tell my players to go out and attack. When you have the players with the skills to take people on one-and-one it's the best way," said Bonfrere, who played for Dutch club MVV Maastricht in the early 1970s.

He walked out in April after Nigeria boycotted the African Nations Cup in South Africa for political reasons. Nigeria has been punished with a ban from the next two African tournaments.

"I came back because the players wanted me and had faith in me," said Bonfrere, adding that the resolution of a row over pay also helped bring him back.

"It's not easy to bring everything together in Nigeria.

As a coach you don't only have to coach and select teams but to think of 100 other things."

The Nigerian players, many of whom play in Europe, clearly have a big future, none more so that captain Nwankwo Kanu.

The Gangly Kanu, who was 20 last Thursday, is moving to Internazionale in Italy from Ajax Amsterdam, with whom he won the European Cup in 1995.

"Argentina is good, Nigeria is good," Kanu said.

It really was a golden weekend for Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation of over 100 million people.

Their soccer triumph followed a shock long jump win by Chionna Ajunwa on Friday which had given Nigeria its first ever Olympic gold.



American tennis superstar Andre Agassi (C) celebrates his maiden Olympic gold triumph on the winners podium along with silver medalist Spain's Sergei Bruguera (L) and bronze medalist Leander Paes of India at the Stone Mountain Tennis Centre on August 3.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Andre floating on air



ATLANTA, Aug 4. An emotional Andre Agassi, almost forgotten in the rush to salute Michael Johnson, Carl Lewis and Kerri Strug, added his name to the list of US golden achievers by winning the Olympic men's tennis title on Saturday, reports agencies.

The 26-year-old Las Vegas thrashed Spain's Sergi Bruguera 6-2, 6-3, 6-1 in just 78 minutes to salvage a previously dismal year which had included four defeats in the six matches prior to his arrival in Atlanta.

Sweetest of all for Agassi, though, was collecting the Olympic gold medal he had set his heart on winning for his father Mike, who boxed for Iran in the 1948 and 1952 games.

Hurling his racket in the air, he trotted over to the crowd to embrace fiancée Brooke Shields and the rest of his entourage before returning to his chair to find his father waiting for him at court-side.

To me this is the greatest accomplishment I've ever had in the sport," Agassi said. "Winning a Grand Slam is the biggest thing you can achieve in tennis, but the Olympics is the biggest thing you can do in all sports."

To win a gold medal is what it's all about. If you can't

come here and give everything to win a medal for your country I think you're really missing out."

Agassi became the first American to win the gold in men's singles since Vincent Richards in 1924.

Agassi's form earlier in the tournament had been distinctly mixed but Bruguera was swept away on a tide of powerful winners and massive determination by an opponent who admitted later he could scarcely have played better.

Overpowered, Bruguera committed unforced errors — almost one per minute in the 77-minute match. Agassi dominated from the start, winning 14 consecutive points at one stretch and closing out the first set at love with a pair of aces.

The unseeded Bruguera made a stand briefly in the second set, when he won a 14-point game to break Agassi. But Agassi immediately broke back for a 3-2 lead and pulled away from there.

PAES POCKETS BRONZE Earlier, Leander Paes emulated a feat last achieved by bantamweight wrestler Khabib Shaba Javad 44 years ago when he won the bronze medal.

His 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Brazilian Fernando Meligeni in the men's singles third place play-off gave India, with a population of 930 million, their first Olympic medal outside hockey since the Helsinki Games.

Paes, whose parents were also Olympians, raised both fists in triumph when Meligeni hit a desperation lob long on match point. The players hugged at the net, and Paes then trotted across the court to celebrate with his family.

Meanwhile, film star Mithun Chakraborty, who handed over a cheque for 51,000 rupees to cricketer Saurav Ganguly for his maiden centuries at Lords, announced his personal cash award of 51,000 rupees to Leander Paes describing him as "pride of India."

Tennis maestro Ramnathan Krishnan also congratulated Paes on winning the medal.

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Paes' father was a member of India's field hockey team at the 1972 Olympics, and his mother played for the basketball team.

A former-top ranked junior player now ranked 127th on the ATP Tour, Paes beat three seeds — American Ricky Reneberg, Thomas Enqvist of Sweden, and Renzo Furlan of Italy — before losing to Andre Agassi in the semifinals.

FERNANDEZES' DOUBLE IMPACT In the women's doubles, Americans Gigi and Mary Joe Fernandez beat Czechs Jana Novotna and Helena Sukova 7-6 (8-6), 6-4 in final.

The Fernandezes, who are not related, earned their second successive Olympic gold after winning in Barcelona.

For Mary Joe, a late addition to the team, the win was particularly rewarding.

"It's so special," she said. "I wasn't on the team to begin with. Since 92 my goal has been to be back on the team. To be able to win again is unbelievable. I still can't believe we did it and I'm really happy."

Touching! ATLANTA, Aug 4: The death of the father of a South Korean handball player was kept from her for six days so as not to affect her game in the Olympic final, her coach said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Chung Hyung-Kyun said he spoke with the mother of left-back Oh Seong-Ok and they decided not to inform her of her father's death until after South Korea's gold medal match against Denmark on Saturday.

"When I talked to her mother, she requested that I did not tell her until after this game," Chung said at a news conference.

South Korea, seeking their third successive Olympic title, were beaten 37-33 by Denmark in the final, and Chung said after the heartbreaking defeat the player was being told the even sadder news.

"I think she just learned [of the death]," Chung said.

Hungary earlier won the bronze, beating Norway 21-18. South Korea, who took the title in both Seoul and Barcelona as well as the 1995 World Championship, started out strongly, matching Denmark's aggressive forward plays with lightning quick passing skills that kept the Danish players scrambling for the ball.

By halftime, South Korea led Denmark 17-13, but inspired by left-back Anja Julandersen Denmark hit back in the second half and also tightened their own defence.

BKSP Cup hockey today Sports Reporter

The first BKSP Cup hockey tournament involving six teams begins at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Portisthan (BKSP) at Savar today.

The Bangladesh national team, preparing for the forthcoming world hockey championships, will take part in the five-day meet under the banners of Bangladesh Red and Bangladesh Green along with Bangladesh Navy, hosts BKSP and Bangladesh Army, who will also field two selections.

The six, split into two groups will feature in the round robin first phase from where top two finishers from each will set up a cross-country semifinal clash to be held on August 7 and 8.

The winners will play in the final on August 9.

Miguel Indurain of Spain waves to the crowd from the winners podium after he took the cycling gold in the Olympic men's individual time trial on August 3.

— AFP/UNB photo

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— AFP/UNB photo



## MEDALS TABLE

ATLANTA, Aug 4 (Reuter): Medals table after the 15th day of competition at the Atlanta Olympics on Saturday (tabulated under gold, silver, bronze):

| Country        | G  | S  | B  | Total | Country     | G | S | B | Total |
|----------------|----|----|----|-------|-------------|---|---|---|-------|
| United States  | 42 | 32 | 25 | 99    | Finland     | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4     |
| Russia         | 26 | 20 | 14 | 60    | Indonesia   | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4     |
| Germany        | 18 | 16 | 27 | 61    | Iran        | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3     |
| China          | 16 | 22 | 12 | 50    | Yugoslavia  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3     |
| France         | 15 | 7  | 14 | 36    | Armenia     | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2     |
| Italy          | 12 | 8  | 11 | 31    | Portugal    | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2     |
| Australia      | 9  | 9  | 20 | 38    | Slovakia    | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2     |
| South Korea    | 7  | 13 | 5  | 25    | Burundi     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1     |
| Cuba           | 7  | 7  | 8  | 22    | Costa Rica  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1     |
| Poland         | 7  | 5  | 4  | 16    | Ecuador     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1     |
| Ukraine        | 7  | 2  | 11 | 20    | Hong Kong   | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1     |
| Spain          | 5  | 6  | 5  | 16    | Syria       | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1     |
| Hungary        | 5  | 4  | 9  | 18    | Argentina   | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3     |
| Romania        | 4  | 7  | 8  | 19    | Slovenia    | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2     |
| Greece         | 4  | 4  | 0  | 8     | Namibia     | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2     |
| Switzerland    | 4  | 2  | 0  | 6     | Austria     | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3     |
| Denmark        | 4  | 1  | 1  | 6     | Malaysia    | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2     |
| Turkey         | 4  | 1  | 1  | 6     | Azerbaijan  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2     |
| Canada         | 3  | 10 | 8  | 21    | Uzbekistan  | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| Bulgaria       | 3  | 6  | 5  | 14    | Bahamas     | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| Japan          | 3  | 6  | 5  | 14    | Latvia      | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| Netherlands    | 3  | 5  | 10 | 18    | Taiwan      | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| Czech Republic | 3  | 3  | 4  | 10    | Croatia     | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| Brazil         | 3  | 2  | 9  | 14    | Philippines | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| New Zealand    | 3  | 2  | 1  | 6     | Zambia      | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1     |
| Ireland        | 3  | 0  | 1  | 4     | Georgia     | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2     |
| Kazakhstan     | 2  | 3  | 4  | 9     | Morocco     | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2     |
| Belgium        | 2  | 2  | 2  | 6     | Trinidad    | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2     |
| Nigeria        | 2  | 1  | 3  | 6     | India       | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| North Korea    | 2  | 1  | 3  | 6     | Israel      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Norway         | 2  | 1  | 3  | 6     | Lithuania   | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| South Africa   | 2  | 1  | 1  | 4     | Mexico      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Algeria        | 2  | 0  | 1  | 3     | Mongolia    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Ethiopia       | 2  | 0  | 1  | 3     | Mozambique  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Britain        | 1  | 8  | 7  | 16    | Moldova     | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Belarus        | 1  | 6  | 8  | 15    | Puerto Rico | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Kehya          | 1  | 4  | 2  | 7     | Thailand    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Jamaica        | 1  | 3  | 2  | 6     | Tunisia     | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |
| Sweden         | 1  | 3  | 2  | 6     | Uganda      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1     |