

BDR clinch nat'l h'ball title

JAMALPUR, Aug 24: Bangladesh Rifles clinched the title of the 11th national men's handball championship beating Bangladesh Police by 24-17 goals in the final at the local stadium today, reports UNB.

This is the 10th national crown for the riflemen out of the 11 championships. They missed the title only in 1988 when Bangladesh Air Force took the honours beating Bangladesh Ansars.

In a close final, the winners — Bangladesh Rifles — led the first session by a narrow 10-9 goals.

Jahangir scored highest 11 goals and Raouf netted five for the winners while Nurul Islam and Nazrul contributed five goals each for the losers.

Earlier in the morning, Bangladesh Ansars beat Bangladesh Air Force in a position-deciding match to become third.

Jahangir of Bangladesh Rifles was adjudged the best player of the meet while host Jamalpur DSA named as the best disciplined team.

Rezauul Karim Hira MP was the chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners. President of Bangladesh Handball Federation Lt Col (retd) MA Hamid was present as special guest.

Warwickshire wag the tail

LONDON, Aug 24: Warwickshire's last wicket pair of Ashley Giles and Tim Munton broke a 66-year-old county record on Friday when they put on 141 together in a rain-shortened second day of their championship match against Worcestershire, reports Reuter.

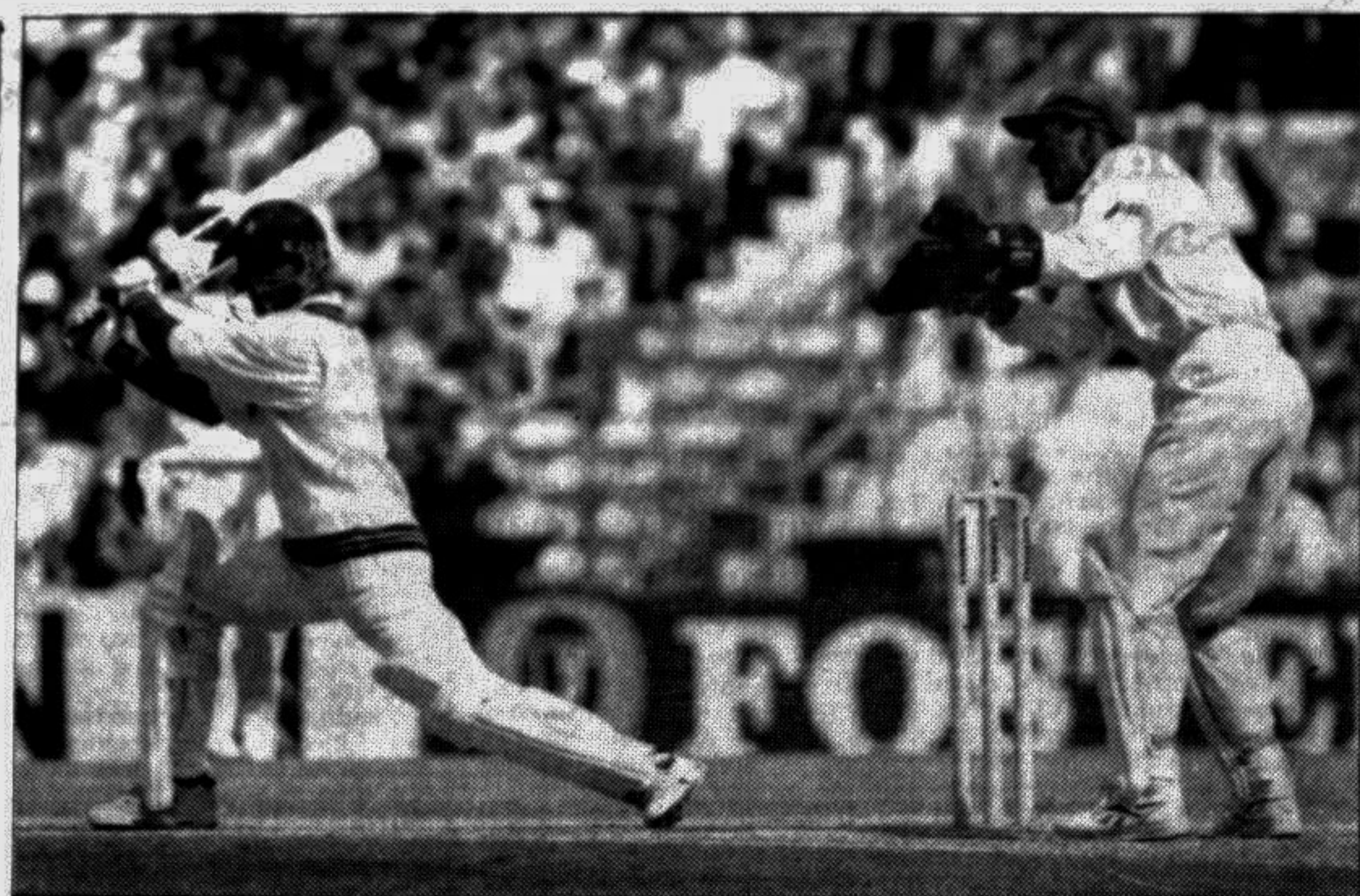
Elsewhere, other championship contenders also suffered from bad weather although former England captain Graham Gooch hit an unbeaten 105, his sixth century of the season and 126th of his career, for fifth-placed Essex against Glamorgan.

The efforts by Warwickshire's last pair enabled the county champions to reach 310 but when Worcestershire had scored 10 without loss in reply rain ended play for the day in mid-afternoon.

Giles made a career-best 83 and Munton reached a maiden century in beating the previous record of 128 for the last wicket set by Fred Santall and Wilf Sanders against Yorkshire in 1930.

The pair had joined forces at 169 for nine on Thursday and the innings would have folded for 199 but for Giles surviving a missed chance on 20.

In all they were together for 142 minutes before Giles was bowled by Alamgir Shyeriar after hitting 124 runs in nearly three hours. Munton (54 not out) collected eight for five and a six off 131 balls during only the fourth century stand for the last wicket in Warwickshire's history.



Elegant Pakistani opener Saeed Anwar executes a delicate square cut while England's Alec Stewart responds to an abortive reflex behind the stumps during the third day's play of the deciding Test at The Oval yesterday. The exciting left-hander notched his highest Test score with a scintillating 176.

Anwar lords over Oval

Sports Reporter

Pakistani left-handed opener Saeed Anwar and the fickleness of the England weather ruled The Oval on the third day of the deciding Test on Saturday as the visitors scored 339 for 4, to claim a slim lead of 13 runs at stumps, according to BBC monitored here last night.

Anwar blasted a cameo 176, his highest Test score and fifth century of the series so far, before England seamer Dominic Cork had the Pakistan run-machine after the tea.

With rain playing foul throughout the day, Pakistan could only muster 110 runs on the third day at the docile Oval pitch. But despite the interruption, Anwar put on an invaluable 84 runs for the third wicket with a wily Inzamamul Huq, who scored 35.

Salim Malik (2) and left-handed Asif Mujtaba (1), weather-permitting will resume the innings today, the fourth day of the third Test.

Agencies add: Pakistan was unable to repeat their second-day run charge as England left-armers Alan Mullally and off-spinner Robert Croft bowled controlled opening spells, Mullally being rewarded in his fourth over with the wicket of Ijaz Ahmed, who was caught behind for 61 after Pakistan had added just 10 runs.

Croft, the pick of England's bowling attack on Friday, continued with his well-controlled, beautifully-flighted orthodox spinners, and bowled three maidens in his opening 12-over spell, conceding just 22 runs.

Saeed brought up Pakistan's 2500 with his 19th boundary — the first boundary of the morning — after cracking a rare loose Mullally delivery through cover-point off the backfoot.

Pakistan had added just 25 runs in the first hour, but the pressure was relieved when spinner Ian Salisbury came on, conceding 11 runs off his first over after being hit for two boundaries by Anwar, who reached 150 for the second time in Tests.

England strike bowler Chris Lewis came on when the new ball was due in the 80th over, but was driven to the boundary

immediately as Anwar brought up the 50-run partnership with Inzamam.

Inzamam registered Pakistan's 300 by clipping Lewis to the boundary through square, and second boundary through cover by Anwar ensured that 10 runs came off Lewis second over.

The shot of the day was Saeed's 25th boundary, an effortlessly punishing mid-off drive off Lewis, taking Anwar to 166. Three runs later the Pakistani opener had levelled his highest Test score which was scored against New Zealand in Wellington in 1994.

Earlier on Friday Pakistan flexed their batting and bowling muscles at The Oval to flatten English hopes of a drawn series.

Apart from John Crawley, who collected the extra six runs he needed for his maiden Test century, a rain-shortened second day belonged entirely to the Pakistanis who romped to 229 for one in reply to England's first innings total of 326.

Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram set the tone by mopping up the last four England wickets for 43 runs before Saeed Anwar scored a glorious unbeaten 116 to tilt the game drastically away from the home side.

Anwar reached three figures in a mere 135 balls with 16 fours, sharing a destructive opening stand of 106 with fellow left-hander Aamir Sohail at almost five runs an over.

The consistent Ijaz Ahmed eagerly joined in, supplying an unbeaten 58 as the shadows and English expression lengthened in equal measure.

Anwar, who scored 74 and 88 in the first Test at Lord's missed his side's tour of Australia after contracting a form of typhoid at home in Karachi and has also undergone hospital tests in London on unrelated stomach problems in recent months.

Now 27, he should be viewed as a classic example of not judging a cricketer on first impressions. His first two Test innings both ended in noughts against West Indies in 1990, but his Test average has since soared into the 40s and is still climbing.

The fit-again Sohail, whose aggregate in the series consisted of just two runs at the start of the day, fell four short of an equally fluent fifth when he drove to short mid-off to give off-spinner Robert Croft his first Test victim.

Croft had a succession of other lung-busting appeals turned down, but he will have to make startling weekend contributions if Pakistan, 1-0 ahead in the best-of-three series, are to be reined back on a good batting pitch.

Crawley had to wait until early afternoon to resume his innings after rain had washed out the morning session, passing the time by strumming a guitar in the dressing-room, finally reaching his goal with an all-run four through mid-wicket off Waqar.

By then, though, England had already lost nightwatchman Salisbury and Dominic Cork with only six runs added to their overnight 278 for six, and Crawley soon followed to a skidding delivery from Waqar who finished with four for 95.

Last man Alan Mullally swung an entertaining 24 off 12 balls before Wasim claimed his third wicket of the innings and his batsmen took control to leave England as exposed as the male streaker who made a brief appearance.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the third day of the third and final Test between England and Pakistan at The Oval on Saturday.

ENGLAND: First innings 326 (J Crawley 106, G Thorpe 54; Waqar Younis 4-95)

PAKISTAN: First innings (overnight 229-1)

Saeed Anwar	c Croft	b Cork	176
Aamir Sohail	c Croft	b Cork	46
Ijaz Ahmed	c Stewart	b Mullally	61
Inzamam	c Hussain	b Mullally	35
Salim Malik	not out		2
Asif Mujtaba	not out		1
Extras	(b 4, lb 3, nb 11)		18
Total	(for four wickets)		339

To bat: Wasim Akram, Moin Khan, Moshqat Ahmed, Waqar Younis and Mohammad Akram.

Bowling	(to date)	O	M	R	W
Lewis		12	1	76	0
Mullally		22	6	56	2
Croft		29	6	64	1
Cork		14.3	4	45	1
Salisbury		17	0	91	0

Glamorgan go after Waqar

LONDON, Aug 24: Waqar Younis has agreed terms to return to county cricket next year, but the Pakistan fast bowler is refusing to confirm his destination, reports Reuter.

Glamorgan remain favourites for his signature, as they are offering a 200,000 pounds sterling (£170,000 dollars) two-year package, which would make Waqar the highest-paid player in English domestic cricket history.

Jonathan Barnett, Waqar's London-based agent, said on Friday, "I believe that Waqar agreed terms this morning but I'm not in a position to say with whom."

Glamorgan cricket secretary Mike Fatkin, who confirmed the Welsh side had made Waqar an offer, said, "We could have an answer within 24 hours, or it might take another two or three days."

Waqar took 232 wickets in three seasons for Surrey in 1990, 1991 and 1993, before back problems interrupted his career.

Pollock's parting shot

LONDON, Aug 24: Shaun Pollock has told Warwickshire that his early departure from his first season in county cricket may not be a final farewell, reports AFP.

The South African all-rounder will end his year at Edgbaston a month early when he returns home next week for ankle surgery.

But he promised that, if invited to return to England, then Warwickshire would remain his preferred choice.

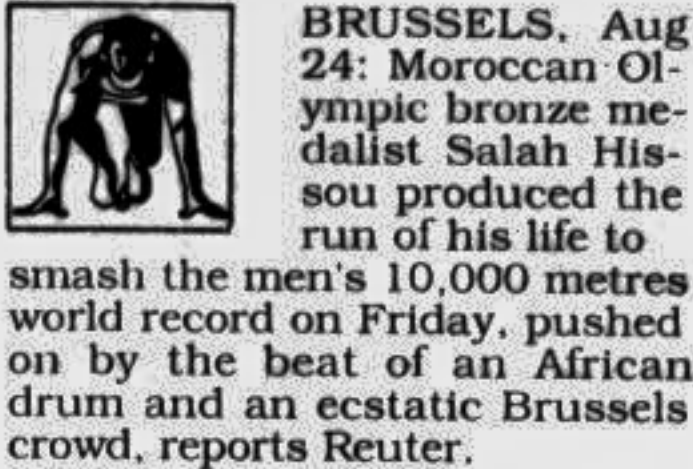
"I would like to come back and play county cricket in the future and I don't think I would like to swap counties," he said.

Pollock added that he was "very disappointed" to be leaving when Warwickshire still have a chance of success in the championship and the Sunday League, but that it was unavoidable.

He explained, "I have been carrying the injury for a while and I hope that by having the surgery now I will be able to last out the new season back home."

"I've really enjoyed my summer here. I will certainly be keeping in touch with the lads' progress in the month of the season."

Salah, Svetlana sizzle



BRUSSELS, Aug 24: Moroccan Olympic bronze medalist Salah Hissou produced the run of his life to smash the men's 10,000 metres world record on Friday, pushed on by the beat of an African drum and an ecstatic Brussels crowd, reports Reuter.

Hissou ate up the ground of a new track to clock 26 minutes 35.08 seconds at the Brussels Grand Prix, slashing 5.45 seconds off the previous mark of 26:43.53 set by Ethiopia's Haile Gebreselassie in the Dutch town of Hengelo in June last year.

It was the second world record of a superb meeting which saw Russian double Olympic champion Svetlana Masterkova break the non-championship women's 1,000 metres, her second world mark in 10 days.

After breaking the world mark for the women's mile in Zurich last Wednesday, Olympic 800 and 1,500 metres champion Masterkova clocked two minutes 28.98 seconds to shave 0.36 seconds off the previous best.

The Russian powered through a fast last lap to improve on the 2:29.34 set by Mozambique's former world champion Maria Mutola in the same stadium in August last year. Mutola pushed the Russian all the way and took second.

and forced his way to the line. Last year, Brussels organisers played African music to spur on the distance racers. The athletes liked it so much that they asked for it again. It clearly added an extra stride to Hissou.

Afterwards the Moroccan said he would go even faster. "I was planning for 13:20 for the first five kilometres and I saw it was 13:25. This was too slow. This was to slow. Next time I will be on pace for the whole race," he said.

"I have achieved my main goal to have a world record. Now I can't think of anything but that it could be faster. I once thought the record was impossible but about a year ago I realised I could do it... I would do it."

The two records were the highlights of the 20th Van Damme Memorial meeting which saw some superb performances on the new track in front of a capacity 40,000 crowd including great middle-distance names of the past such as Britain's Sebastian Coe and New Zealander John Walker.

Dennis Mitchell upstaged a trio of Olympic 100 metres champions, Kenyan Daniel Komen produced another historic 3,000 metres and American high hurdler Allen Hohnson went within 0.01 seconds of the world record despite damp conditions.

Kingdom, Jackson, the only man to have run faster, could not live with his speed, taking second in 13.24 seconds.

Komen failed to qualify for the Olympics but has run the second fastest 3,000 and 5,000 metres in history since the Games. On Friday, the 20-year-old clocked 7:25.87 for the shorter race, beating Algerian world record holder Noureddine Morceli in the process.

It was the third best time ever but Komen was not satisfied. Olympic 1,500 metres champion Morceli, who has been suffering with injury since Atlanta, finished sixth in 7:36.81, well outside his world record of 7:25.11.

American Michael Johnson cruised to a 400 metres victory in 44.29 seconds in his first appearance at a major meeting since his historic 200-400 double at Atlanta.

Johnson, who has been nursing a hamstring injury from the Olympics, could afford himself the luxury of putting up his hands in triumph a few strides from the finish of the race.

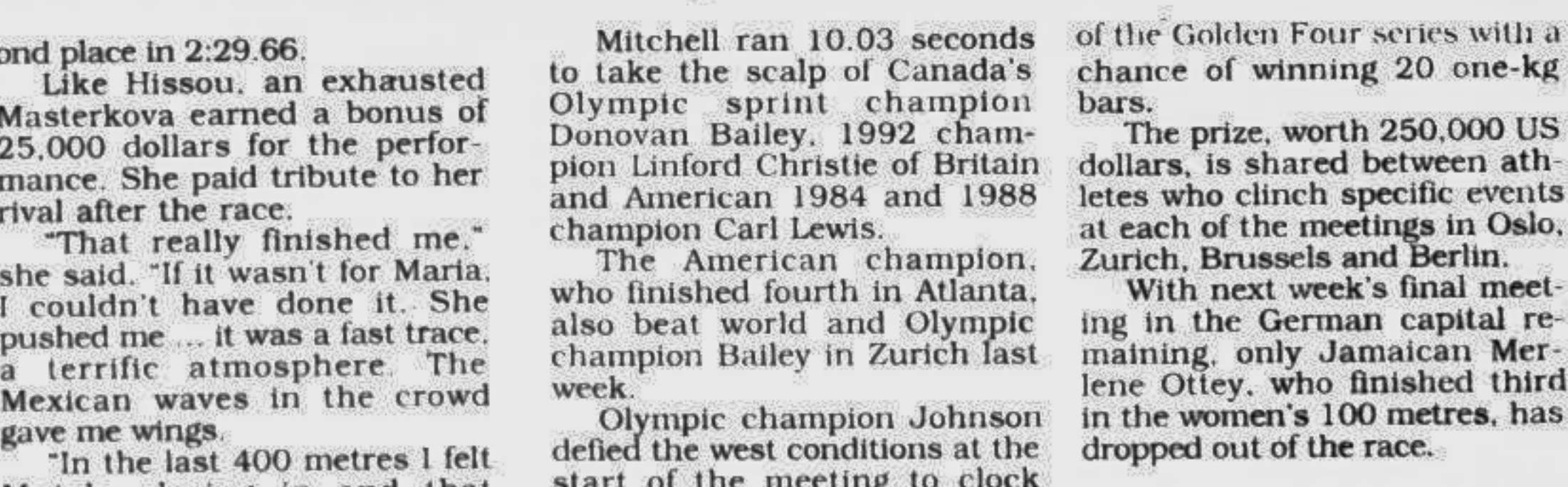
It was not as fast as his victory in Atlanta when he clocked 43.49 but the Belgian crowd rose to their feet as Johnson moved up into top gear with 200 metres to go and powered down the home straight.

Seven athletes went into Friday's penultimate meeting of the Golden Four series with a chance of winning 20 one-kg bars.

The prize, worth 250,000 US dollars, is shared between athletes who clinch specific events at each of the meetings in Oslo, Zurich, Brussels and Berlin.

With next week's final meeting in the German capital remaining, only Jamaican Merlene Ottey, who finished third in the women's 100 metres, has dropped out of the race.

The athletes still in the hunt are Namibia's Frankie Fredericks (200 metres), Denmark's Wilson Kipketer (800), American Derrick Adkins (400 hurdles), Britain's Jonathan Edwards (triple jump), German Lars Riedel (discus) and Bulgarian high jumper Stefka Kostadinova.



Olympic gold medalist Russian Svetlana Masterkova points to the clock after winning the women's 1,000 metres in a new world record time of 2 minutes and 28.98 seconds during 20th Van Damme track and field meeting in Brussels on Aug 23.

and place in 2:29.66. Like Hissou, an exhausted Masterkova earned a bonus of 25,000 dollars for the performance. She paid tribute to her rival after the race.

"That really finished me," she said. "If it wasn't for Maria, I couldn't have done it. She pushed me... It was a fast race, a terrific atmosphere. The Mexican waves in the crowd gave me wings."

"In the last 400 metres I felt Mutola closing in and that drove me to the decisive extra effort."

Gebreselassie defeated Hissou to win the 10,000 at the Atlanta Games and was not competing here. The 24-year-old Moroccan brought the crowd to their feet when he gritted his teeth on the last lap.

Mitchell ran 10.03 seconds to take the scalp of Canada's Olympic sprint champion Donovan Bailey, 1992 champion Linford Christie of Britain and American 1984 and 1988 champion Carl Lewis.

The American champion, who finished fourth in Atlanta, also beat world and Olympic champion Bailey in Zurich last week.

Olympic champion Johnson defied the worst conditions at the start of the meeting to clock 12.92 seconds in the 110 hurdles, just one hundredth of a second outside the world record held by Britain's Colin Jackson.

Johnson ran the same time at the US Olympic trials in Atlanta in June to become the second equal fastest hurdler of all time with American Roger

Chang suffered a setback points at 3-5, 0-40 with strong service but committed four errors as Kucera held for the match in the 10th game.

Medvedev overcame a strong challenge from Jonathan Stark for a 7-5 (7-4), 4-6, 6-3 victory.

Medvedev broke open a tight duel with Stark by reaching 3-0 with two service breaks in the final set.

Stark outscored Medvedev 11-9 in service aces, but a double-fault in the ninth game of the third set erased his last chance after he had broken Medvedev in the fourth game.

Voinea reached leads of 4-1 and 6-3 in the first set tiebreaker, then double-faulted but produced a service winner to close out the set.

Chang suffers a setback

COMMACK, New York, Aug 24: Karol Kucera of Slovakia came up with the biggest victory of his career Friday night, a 6-4, 0-4 win over top seeded Michael Chang in the quarterfinals of the Waldbaum Hamlet Cup, reports AP.

Kucera, ranked 86th in the world, handed the third ranked Chang his second loss in 18 matches on hard court this summer. The other was to Andre Agassi in the finals at Cincinnati earlier this month.

The loss gives Chang two days to regroup for the US Open, where he is the second seed.

"I hope this won't effect me going into the Open," Chang said. "It's strange. I felt good in the warm-up before the match. I hate to have a day like this just before the Open."

With Chang eliminated, fifth-seeded Andre Medvedev of the Ukraine became the only seed to reach the Hamlet Cup semifinals and he will play Kucera.

Adrian Voinea of Romania, who will be defending champion Pete Sampras' first round opponent in the US Open, also advanced to the semifinals with a 7-6 (7-4), 6-2, victory over Sweden's Thomas Johansson on Friday.

Voinea's semifinal opponent will be Martin Damm of the Czech Republic, a 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 winner over Michael Joyce.

Chang double-faulted at an inopportune time to lose service in the fifth game and then fell behind 0-4 in the second set.

"I am very happy, I am yelling inside," Kucera, 22, said. "But I knew I could beat Michael. We played last year on clay in Rome and he beat me when we were 3-3 in the third set."

Chang erased three match points at 2-29.66.

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Edberg's last reflections

NEW YORK, Aug 24: Stefan Edberg's once stormy and later joyous relationship with the US Open is nearing a poignant farewell as the two-time champion heads toward his retirement at the end of this year, reports Reuter.

"The US Open has grown into something special for me," the classy 30-year-old Swede said of the year's final Grand Slam event which begins on Monday.

"It will be a little bit sad going into it. I know it is my last one and I have accepted it," Edberg said following a spirited two-hour practice session with defending champion Pete Sampras on the Open's stadium court.

Early in his career the lachrymose Swede could not seem to handle the unique playing conditions of the Open. Unruly

fans swirling winds and the constant rumble of jets taking off and landing at nearby La Guardia airport seemed to play havoc with Edberg's concentration.

"I had a hard time dealing with the Open in the beginning with all of the things that were going on," Edberg recalled.

His inability to cope with the myriad distractions made Edberg a regular upset victim at Flushing Meadow.

In 1990 as the world number one, Edberg became the first top seed to lose in the first round in 19 years when he fell to Russian Alexander Volkov in straight sets.

Yet somehow Edberg not only came to grip with the open, but mastered it, putting together impressive back-to-back campaigns that carried him to the title in 1991 and 1992.

"Since winning it, the whole thing changed," he said. "Now I think the US Open has something that other tournaments don't have, you have a very special feeling being here."



Pakistan opener Aamir Sohail known for his explosive-ness, plays a rather sedate forward defensive shot on the second day of The Oval Test against England on August 23.

Arantxa faces Novotna in semis

CARLSBAD, California, Aug 24: Top-seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain and doubles partner Jana Novotna will clash in the semifinals at the 450,000 dollars Toshiba Classic, reports Reuter.

Sanchez-Vicario combined an effective serve, firing in seven aces, with her signature baseline game to ease past unseeded Katrina Studenikova of Slovakia 6-3, 6-3 on Friday.

Rubin skips US Open

NEW YORK, Aug 24: Promising 10th-ranked American Chanda Rubin has pulled out of the US Open with a wrist injury, tournament officials announced, reports Reuter.

The 20-year-old Rubin, who was to be seeded 11th, is still suffering from tendinitis of the right wrist that has kept her sidelined in recent months.