

Wang puts off Athens trip

BEIJING, July 21: China's Olympic 5,000 metres champion Wang Junxia has pulled out of next month's World Championships in Athens, citing illness and personal problems, a Chinese Athletics Association (CAA) official said today, reports AFP.

Wang, who also took silver in the 10,000 metres in Atlanta, will not compete in Athens even if the International Amateur Athletics Association (IAAF) gives her a wild card, said CAA secretary general Shang Xiutang.

Wang was not included in the 27-member Chinese team list that was made public today.

"She quit training after the Olympics and took part in no competitions since last October," Shang said.

"We heard that she was bothered by a constant headache and some other private problems. Her coach hopes she can come back next year," he added.

Shang also revealed that the 23-year-old world 10,000m record holder still holds a bitter grudge against her former coach and mentor, Ma Junren, who guided her to the 10,000m title at the 1993 World Championships.

Ma still refuses to give Wang the car she won as a prize at that event.

Wang walked out on "Ma's army" after the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima, and has been coached ever since by Mao Dechen.

However, Mao revealed recently that the track queen, who is considered a national hero in China, had lost her motivation after Atlanta and wanted to retire.

Culprit coach turns tail

KIEV, Ukraine, July 21: Police were searching Monday for a former soccer coach who allegedly assaulted a referee and a linesman after his team lost a match, reports AP.

Yuri Pogrebnjak was banned from Ukrainian soccer for life after the two officials said he and three other men entered their hotel room early last Monday and beat them in retribution for a questionable call. Pogrebnjak's team lost 2-0.

Police have launched a criminal investigation into the attack, which left the referees with broken bones and bruised the reputation of soccer in Ukraine. They want to detain Pogrebnjak, but they cannot find him.

"He is hiding," said Interior Ministry spokesman Viktor Kirovskiy.

Pogrebnjak, who was head coach of Metallurg in the southern city of Mariupol, will likely be charged with "malicious hooliganism," Kirovskiy said. "he would face one to five years in prison if convicted."

Metallurg Mariupol was fined 5,000 dollars and will be disqualified for the season if its players or staff commit another serious violation.

A nation in short supply of success

NEW DELHI, July 21 (AFP): Independent India has not exactly set the sports world alight during its first 50 years of sporting endeavour.

Since 1947 and the end of colonial rule, the country with the second largest population in the world can boast a few dusty Olympic gold medals, an ageing cricket World Cup trophy, Sachin Tendulkar and not much else.

Only grey-haired sports fans remember India's total domination of world hockey, which began in 1928, way before independence, and lasted through to the late 1950s.

The country's last of eight hockey golds came in 1980, just three years before Kapil Dev was to hoist aloft the World Cup of cricket, a game brought to the country by the British colonialists.

For the last quarter of a century, however, Indian fans have been reduced to applauding home cricket victories — on doctored pitches made to suit

Khaled's fall from grace

BEIRUT, July 21: A Saudi Arabian athlete tested positive for drugs and was stripped of gold and silver medals that he won last week at the Pan-Arab Games, officials said Sunday, reports AP.

Khaled Sulaiman el-Khaledi is the first athlete to be disqualified at the Arab Games for a drug violation. Testing for performance enhancing drugs and steroids was introduced this year for the first time at the eighth Pan-Arab sporting event.

El-Khaledi had taken a gold in the men's discus with a throw of 54.30 metres (59.4 yards) on Monday and a silver in shot put last Sunday, the opening day of the competitions.

Out of 75 urine samples of track and field winners, only el-Khaledi's tested positive in a Paris laboratory, said the Arab Sports Federation secretary general Osman Saad.

He did not give details of the drugs el-Khaledi is said to have taken. Saudi Arabian officials were not immediately available for comment.

Egypt's runner-up in discus, Sameh Sayeed, was moved up to the gold medal while Nashed Doussari of Qatar was given the silver for the shot put and Egyptian Dia Kamel Abdel Rahman the bronze.

Brown shatters Sunday record

LONDON, July 21: Alastair Brown smashed his way into the English Sunday League record books by scoring 203 for Surrey against Hampshire, reports Reuter.

Opener Brown beat the previous individual record in the 40 overs competition of 176 by former England captain Graham Gooch for Essex against Glamorgan at Southend in 1983.

Brown was just three runs short of equaling the best limited-overs score in England — 206 by former West Indies Test cricketer Alvin Kallicharran for Warwickshire against Oxfordshire in the 60 overs NatWest Trophy in 1984.

The Surrey opener, who played in three one-day internationals for England last year, plundered 11 sixes and 19 fours in his 119-ball innings in the match at Guildford.

Brown reached his hundred in 56 balls and his 200 from 118 balls as he fired Surrey to 344 for five off their 40 overs on the relatively small Guildford Club ground.

The double century-maker attributed his success to a recent return to fitness and form after a mixed northern summer.

Brown said, "This season I was going well when I broke my

hand, which I played through, but it was not quite right for me.

"In the last couple of weeks the pain has eased and I have come into form, but to be fair the wicket was very good to bat



ALASTAIR BROWN

Brown's performance spurred league champions Surrey to victory by 68 runs after dismissing Hampshire for 276.

Essex went top of the league when Paul Grayson struck two runs off the final ball of the match to secure a two-wicket win over Northamptonshire at Northampton.

Set 199 for victory, Essex slipped from 155 for three to 190 for eight before Grayson took his side home with an unbeaten 69.

Opener Jason Gallian hammered an unbeaten 80 as Lancashire beat Sussex by eight wickets at Old Trafford to go level on 32 points with Essex, who have a game in hand and a superior run rate.

Set to make 171, Lancashire cruised to victory with 5.1 overs to spare after Gallian had shared an opening stand of 103 with England captain Michael Atherton (36).

England paceman Dean Headley looks to have proved his fitness for the fourth Ashes Test, though his county Kent lost to Leicestershire at Canterbury by 33 runs.

Headley, who had been suffering from a side strain, took three for 44 as Leicestershire compiled 258 for seven off their 40 overs. Kent were bowled out for 225.

Gooch set for final shot

LONDON, July 21: Graham Gooch, who won more caps and scored more Test runs for England than any other cricketer, is to end his playing career this week, report agencies.

The former England captain has chosen Essex's county championship match against Worcestershire at Chelmsford starting on Wednesday — his 44th birthday — for his final appearance.

During a 24-year career, Gooch has scored nearly 45,000 first-class runs to be 10th in the all-time list, and hit 129 centuries.

When he retired from Tests after the 1994-95 tour of Australia, he had won a record 118 caps for England and was their highest scorer with 8,900 runs. He made 20 centuries and averaged 42.58.

He was the leading English scorer in county cricket last season, but a succession of mediocre scores for Essex this season has forced his decision to retire, announced on Sunday. He will now concentrate on his duties as an England selector.

"The time has come to go. All good things come to an end," said Gooch.

"I wouldn't say I've lost it, but it's not happening for me at the moment. I've too much respect for what I've achieved to just hang on."

"It's time to go. The old petrol light has been flashing for about five years and now I know

the tank is empty.

"I started out in April with

every intention of playing a full

season, scoring 1,000 runs, doing

well and seeing how it went.

He is the only Englishman to have scored 2,000 first-class runs in a season on five occasions, while he and his former Test opening partner Geoff Boycott are the only two Englishmen to have averaged over 100 in a season.

In 1990 he became the first Englishman to score 1,000 Test runs during a single English summer. That milestone came after he scored 333 and 123 in successive innings for England against India at Lord's.

Doug Insole, Gooch's mentor at Essex for most of his career and a former England selector, is convinced the opener will be heralded as one of England's great players.

"He was a magnificent player and some of his innings would certainly be termed as great," Insole said.

"When he got into the Test side in 1975 he did so on the back of a sparkling innings for the MCC. It was strokeplay at its very best which got him in but after that he analysed his game, took it apart and became a much more orthodox player in defence."

Gooch said the best fast bowler he had faced was Malcolm Marshall of the West Indies while Australia's Shane Warne was his pick of the spin bowlers. He said Border and South Africa's Barry Richards were great batsmen.

Sports Authority of India (SAI) plays the perfect defensive stroke.

"This business of 960 million people and no medals is crap," he says.

Only a quarter of that number will actually know what international sport is. The rest are bothered about trying to guarantee success.

In the 1980s, SAI seemed to

recognise the dilemma and launched a scheme to unearth talent from India's remotest areas, arguing that tribesmen should make good archers.

One man, Limba Ram of Ra-

jasthan, went on to become national archery champion and represented India at international level. But it was a drop in the ocean.

Mathur says the lack of finan-

cial incentives — Tendulkar

may be a dollar millionaire but India's best known footballer, Baichung Bhutia, earns a more modest 42,000 dollars a year — is another hurdle.

Most Indian kids idolise Bill

Gates, not Maradona.

"Cricket is the only game in India that makes money," he says. "You can make a decent living because industrial companies employ cricketers."

"But how many parents in India want their children to take sport as a professional career? You can count them on your finger tips."

"In such a scenario, how do you expect to have world champions?"

Kapil Dev, however, says India's administrators are to blame. Stars like Leander Paes — who won a tennis bronze at the Atlanta Olympics, India's only medal — succeed despite the system, not because of it.

"Only cricket is well organised because there is money in it. Look at the other federations, they are a joke."

"It's not that money is not there. You can get sponsors for almost any event — but that money is reserved for international meets. No one bothers about the grassroots."

Some administrators are ac-

used to being more interested in foreign trips than their charges. At the Asian Games in Hiroshima, India sent 42 ath-

letes ... and 46 officials.

The lack of expertise, mean-

while, was perfectly reflected in Atlanta when India's Sports Minister told a press conference that the nation would struggle to win 100 gold medals at the next Games.

An aide nudged him. "Sorry,"

said the minister. "I meant one

gold medal, not 100."

With friends like that, who

needs enemies?

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