

County cricket roundup

LONDON, Aug 7: A career-best 196 not out by Philip Weston...
The home side began well enough when debutant seam bowler John Blain bowled Tim Curtis...

Gavin Haynes was dismissed for eight and Reuben Spiring was run out for 35. But then Weston joined forces with David Leatherdale...

Leatherdale was eventually out for 110, caught behind playing a tired shot off Tony Pennington.

Middlesex captain Mark Ramprakash was left on 99 not out when rain and bad light cut short the first day against Hampshire at Lord's.

Lancashire paceman Peter Martin continued his recent run of form to claim six for 46 as Warwickshire were skittled for 139 at Blackpool.

Neil Fair brother (60) and Graham Lloyd (70 not out) then put on 127 in 25 overs to help Lancashire to 194 for three at the close, a lead of 55.

Martin was ably supported by Ian Austin, who finished with four for 45.

Minister comes to the rescue

ATHENS, Aug 7: Greek sports minister Andreas Fournas on Wednesday tried to defuse the war of words between IAAF president Primo Nebiolo and local organisers over the low attendance at the World Championships, reports AP.

"Let people do their jobs and not have others trying to find blame where there is none," Fournas said at a function organised by the Greek Athletics Federation, where Nebiolo was one of the guests of honour.

Clashing between Nebiolo and Athens '97 officials over the small turnout on the first day of the championships threatened to overshadow the event.

According to Greek newspaper reports, Nebiolo allegedly demanded that Fournas fire Evangelos Savramis, the organizing committee's general director.

Savramis had earlier accused Nebiolo of using soldiers to pack Rome's stadium during the 1987 championships. He further infuriated Nebiolo by saying that tickets were not watermelons and could not be flogged by vans with loudspeakers driving around the capital.

The International Olympic Committee president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, defended the Greeks.

"It is unjust the war that is occurring in Athens, firstly because there were no significant finals on Saturday and secondly because this stadium is too big to fill," Samaranch was quoted as saying by the Athens Daily Ethnos. "In fact things here are better than they were at Göteborg."

Goteborg, Sweden, hosted the 1995 World Championships. Ethnos and other newspapers quoted Samaranch as saying that Barcelona's Camp Nou soccer stadium, which seats nearly 120,000, looks empty when there are 75,000 fans inside it.

"Don't forget that even a big stadium can look empty even with 50,000 people inside it," Samaranch said.

Athens' cavernous Olympic Stadium, which seats about 85,000.



Wilson Kipketer of Kenya raises his arms in jubilation after winning the 3,000 metres steeplechase at the World Championships in Athens on Aug 6. His compatriot Bernard Barmasai who took the bronze, is on the background. —AFP/UNB photo

Moroccan dethrones Morceli

ATHENS, Aug 7: Hicham El Guerrouj took over from fellow North African Noureddine Morceli as the new king of the 1,500 metres on Wednesday with an emphatic victory on the fifth day of the World Championships, reports Reuter.

El Guerrouj, who has mounted a concerted assault on Morceli's world outdoor records this year without success so far, won the men's 1,500 in three minutes 35.83 seconds.

"Morceli had his time," the Moroccan said. "He's been such a great champion, I guess it's my turn."

Algerian Morceli, three times the world champion, had no response to the power, aggression and confidence of his Moroccan rival.

El Guerrouj bided his time, kicked with 500 to run and glided to his first major title.

"It was a classic example of a sit and kick race," he said.

Halle Gebrselassie, who had planned to miss these championships because of concern over the hard track, was equally devastating in the men's 10,000 metres final.

The tiny Ethiopian coasted behind the leaders before suddenly accelerating with 600 metres remaining to win in 27:28.67 as dusk fell on the Olympic stadium.

"I am proud to have won three world titles," he said.

Czech Tomas Dvorak spurned the chance of a world record after setting six personal bests on his way to the decathlon title.

Another personal best in the final event would have overtaken Dan O'Brien's mark but Dvorak opted to jog through the 1,500 metres. American O'Brien, the Olympic and world champion, missed the championships through injury.

"I was playing safe throughout the competition, never experimenting," Dvorak explained.

Javier Sotomayor reclaimed his world high jump title after two years of foot, ankle and knee injuries, winning with a leap of 2.37 metres.

"I panicked a bit when I failed my first jump of the competition at 2.25 but when I cleared 2.35 very easily I knew I had the gold medal," the Cuban said.

As expected, a Kenyan won the 3,000 steeplechase title. But this time it was not three

times champion Moses Kiptanui but his teammate Wilson Boti Kipketer.

Kiptanui was given second place in the same time as another Kenyan Bernard Barmasai.

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Jayasinghe's feat

ATHENS, Greece, Aug 7: The Asian 200 metres record was first broken by Sri Lanka's Sunanthika Jayasinghe Wednesday and then matched 20 minutes later by China's Li Xuemel at the World Championships Wednesday, reports AP.

Jayasinghe set a time of 22.44 seconds in her 200m heat early Wednesday before Li matched it. The time made both athletes the fifth best performers of the season.

But Li, just 20, failed to make the semifinals when she finished only fourth in her evening quarterfinal and her time of 23.06 fell .11 short to qualify as a lucky loser.

The Sri Lankan runner lived up to her early promise by also winning her quarterfinal.

Jayasinghe is 22 and her mark knocked an amazing .51 seconds off international record.

The old Asian record of 22.53 was by China's Du Xijue two years ago.

The world record still stands at 21.34, set by Florence Griffith-Joyner of the United States in 1988.

Martina, Monica in last eight

LOS ANGELES, Aug 7: Martina Hingis breezed and Monica Seles battled, but the top two seeds both advanced to the quarterfinals of the 4,500,000-dollar Acura Classic tennis tournament here Wednesday, reports AP.

Hingis, the world number one and top seed whose nine titles this year included the Australian Open and Wimbledon, downed France's unseeded Anne-Gaëlle Sidot 6-2, 6-2.

Seles, ranked third in the world and seeded second, fought back from a set down and a 3-5 deficit in the second to beat France's Sandrine Testud 6-7 (6-8), 7-6 (7-4), 6-3.

Seles avenged a third-round Wimbledon loss to Testud, ranked 19th in the world, but she admitted that she is less than satisfied with her game.

"No, I think the only one who is where she wants to be on the tour right now is Martina," Seles said. "That's where you try to be."

Seles, owner of nine Grand Slam titles, said her own play is too inconsistent, and she lacks the intensity that once made her the number one player in the world.

"I'm having trouble deciding what to do," she said. "Even in the point, the ball is coming and I'm thinking of four shots ... instead of just hitting the ball as hard as I can."

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Havelange pulls rank?

RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug 7: FIFA president Joao Havelange threatened on Wednesday to expel Brazil from world soccer's governing body — and from the World Cup — if he is not drawn up by Sports Minister Pele becomes law, reports Reuter.

In an interview with the Journal do Brasil daily newspaper, Havelange said: "If this bill is approved, there will be no alternative. The FIFA committees will have a meeting and expel Brazil, who will not be able to take part in the World Cup as a result."

Pele's new bill, presented to President Fernando Henrique Cardoso on Tuesday, proposes incentives for clubs that become publicly traded companies, making soccer club directors more accountable and to turning all players into free agents within two years.

It also proposes taking control of disciplinary tribunals and refereeing away from the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) and handing them to independent bodies.

"FIFA statutes say that referees have to be subordinated to the (national) associations, just as do disciplinary tribunals," Havelange said.

"The CBF has been a member of FIFA for more than 80 years, always respecting its statutes and rules. It's the same with all the other affiliated associa-

tions. Anyone who does not agree can leave. But they won't get a game.

"It's strange that the (sports) ministry should turn against an institution that is being run in an efficient and modern way," he was quoted as saying, referring to the CBF. "I'm respected in the entire world and now I see the government of my

country turning against the entity (over) which I preside."

The CBF, whose president is Havelange's son-in-law Ricardo Teixeira, has been hugely criticised in Brazil recently for its running of the domestic game.

There was outrage in June when Teixeira reinstated two clubs — Fluminense and Bragantomp — who had been relegated from the First Division of the national championship last year. As a result the bloated tournament now has 26 teams.

Teixeira, who has been CBF president since 1989, also reinstated Atletico Paranaense, who were suspended for a year in May in the wake of a corruption scandal. Although Teixeira himself was not incriminated in the scandal, he was widely criticised for his handling of the affair.

Pele and Havelange have been at loggerheads before. In 1993 when the legendary former player said that corruption existed within the CBF, as a result, Havelange withdrew an invitation for Pele to take part in the draw for the 1994 World Cup in Las Vegas.

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