

County cricket roundup

LONDON, Aug 8: Kent kept up the pressure on the county championship pacemakers by compiling 525 for nine declared against fellow title hopefuls Essex, reports Reuters.

Matthew Fleming hit 138 as Kent, two points ahead of fourth-placed Essex, reached their highest total of the season.

By the close Essex had slumped to 80 for five and it might have been worse had Ronnie Irani not been dropped twice off successive balls from Martin McCague who finished with four for 55.

Middlesex captain Mark Ramprakash hit a brilliant 190 to put his side on top against Hampshire at Lord's.

Middlesex amassed 442 for eight before Ramprakash declared, allowing his bowlers to remove two Hampshire batsmen for 69 before stumps.

Worcestershire's Philip Weston completed a superb double century in his side's 551 at Northampton.

Northants ended on 208 for three, still 194 adrift of the follow-on.

Championship leaders Gloucestershire finally got their game against Somerset underway late into the afternoon of the second day and were immediately in trouble.

Graham Rose took three for 28 from 11 overs as Gloucestershire crumbled from 91 to one to 119 for four.

Darren Shadford bowled Lancashire to the brink of victory over fifth-placed Warwickshire at Blackpool with a stunning burst for four wickets in 10 balls. Warwickshire will resume on 241 for eight, just 18 ahead.

Lancashire had extended their first innings, 194 for three overnight, to 362 all out.

Sidoti wins 10000m walk

ATHENS, Greece, Aug 8: Italy's Annarita Sidoti led from start to finish to win the 10,000-metre walk ahead of Olimpiada Ivanova of Russia at the World Championships Thursday.

Olga Karpoditsseva of Belarus took the bronze, reports AP.

Russian Olga Panfyrova was disqualified after being warned three times for running when she was in silver medal position three-quarters through the race.

Defending champion Irina Stankina of Russia also was disqualified.

Sidoti set the year's best time in 42 minutes 55.49 seconds and kept a gap of 12.14 seconds over Ivanova. Karpoditsseva finished with 43:30.20.

Stankina was the youngest champion ever, when she took the title two years ago and also held the top performance of the year.

Sidoti took the early initiative and set a pace only Russians Ivanova and Panfyrova could match. Ivanova fell back halfway through the race, as the temperature of 32 C (90F) began to take its toll on the competitors.

The race was held before a disappointing crowd of some 15,000 in the 85,000-capacity Olympic stadium.

Valencia ride on Romario

VALENCIA, Spain, Aug 8: Brazilian ace Romario showed he planned to make good on his promise of goals galore Thursday when he lifted Valencia 1-0 over Atletico de Madrid in the last minute, reports AP.

Romario, who returned to Valencia this week after a year on loan with Flamengo, scored a nifty goal from 35-metres out when he caught, bounced and shot the ball with the same foot.

A strong Atletico defense was unbreakable throughout the first half of the pre-season match.

But Valencia's luck changed in minute 55 when Atletico were left with 10 men after Rumanian Daniel Prodan was ejected with two yellow cards.

Romario charged the goal in minute 90 only to be stopped in his tracks by Atletico goalkeeper Francisco Molina.

In the 79th minute, Atletico's newly-retired Portuguese player Paulo Futre teamed up with Jose Luis Caminero for exciting play.

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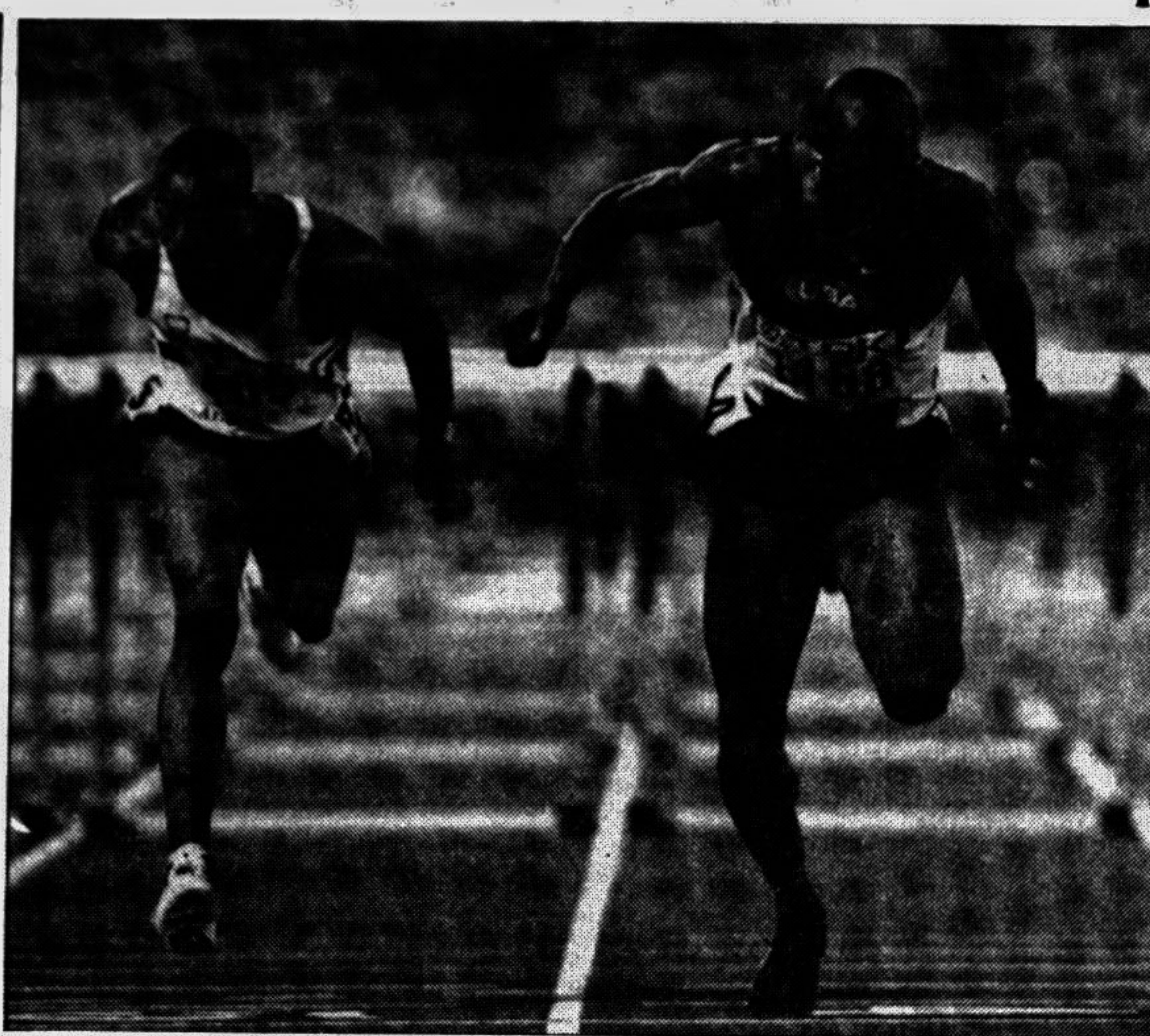
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American Allen Johnson (R) roars as he crosses the line ahead of Colin Jackson of Britain to lift the 110m hurdles gold at the World Athletics Championships in Athens on Aug 7. — AFP/UNB photo

Allen produces his best

ATHENS, Aug 8: After winning two world championship titles and an Olympic gold medal in three years, there's only one thing left for Allen Johnson to attain. A world record, reports AP.

Johnson could have that before long, too — maybe as early as next week.

The 26-year-old American equalled the third-fastest time in history and came within .02 seconds of the record in winning the 110-metre hurdles Thursday night at the World Championships.

With British rival and world record-holder Colin Jackson in the next lane, Johnson burst quickly from the blocks, was comfortably ahead over the first hurdle and held the lead the rest of the way to win in 12.93 seconds.

Jackson, the 1993 world champion who has battled back to top form after a series of injuries, took the silver in 13.05. Slovakia's Igor Kovac got third in 13.18.

"I've got the triple now," Johnson said. "World Championships (1995), Olympics (1996), World Championships (1997). This was the toughest one by far because I had the pressure of being the defending champ."

"Now I have to see if I can win two straight Olympics." Before that, Johnson should

have a shot at breaking the world record of 12.91 that Jackson set at the 1993 worlds in Stuttgart.

Johnson said he wasn't going for the record Thursday because he wanted above all to retain his title.

"We ran three times in four days and that takes a lot out of you," he said. "If I was going for the record, I could have made a mistake and Colin could have shot past me. I ran a little conservatively."

But Johnson said he expects the record to go eventually.

"The world record is important to me and I want to break it," he said. "If everything goes well, the record will be mine when the time comes."

How soon?

"I'll try to get that world record in Zurich," he said, referring to the big-money meet in Switzerland next Wednesday.

Jackson, who also is scheduled to run in the same meet, agreed the record could be in danger then.

"We're both capable of going under 12.90," he said. "We can push ourselves and break that record. It might even happen in Zurich next week."

For once, Johnson was able to save a victory without being overshadowed by that other Johnson, Michael Johnson set his astonishing world record in the 200 on the same night Allen

set a Games' record in winning the hurdles gold.

"There are a lot of Johnsons," Allen said. "Lawrence Johnson. Michael Johnson. I just want to be the No 1 Allen Johnson."

Friday's schedule featured five finals, all with intriguing story lines.

In the men's triple jump, world record-holder Jonathan Edwards of Britain was paired against American rival and Olympic champion Kenny Harrison. 37-year-old Merlene Ottey was favoured for gold in the women's 200 in the absence of injured Olympic champion Marie-Jose Perec; Ato Boldon, Frankie Fredericks and Jon Drummond duked for supremacy in the men's 200; Wilson Kipketer took aim at the 800-metre world record he shares with Sebastian Coe, and Olympic champion Deon Hemmings faced world record-holder Kim Batten in the women's 400 hurdles.

In other finals Thursday, Olympic champion Astrid Kumbernuss of Germany won her second straight world title in the