

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, July 23: Diego Maradona on Wednesday said he wants to return to Argentina's national team, this time as coach, reports AP. "I feel I have the experience and know-how to coach the national team," said the former Argentine captain. "The truth is, I'm dying to coach the team but it's a question of the directors," he said, referring to the Argentine Football Association (AFA). However, it appears unlikely the association's brass would consider the four-time World Cup star. Maradona and AFA's president Julio Grondona reportedly do not see eye-to-eye.



### Fedorchenko's gift for his coach

UNIONDALE, New York, July 23: Sergei Fedorchenko, the world vault champion from Kazakhstan, won the men's vault event at the Goodwill Games on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Despite going up first on the even (judges usually save higher scores for later), Fedorchenko was rewarded with a 9.65 average for his two difficult vaults.

"I'm still in pain. But I had to do what I had to do," said Fedorchenko, referring to an injured shoulder. "My coach's (Alexander Kalich) birthday is Saturday, and I wanted to give him a birthday present."

Fedorchenko edged Russian Nikolay Krukov, who scored 9.60 and Eric Lopez (Cuba), third with 9.575.

US athletes swept the other three events—women's floor exercise and balance beam and men's still rings—although some present questioned the judging after still rings.

American Chris Lamorte earned a 9.70 for a shaky routine that ended with a wobble on his landing.

In contrast, European champion Szilveszter Csollany of Hungary was awarded a 9.625 after he hit all of his many strength moves and landed his double layout dismount perfectly.

World all-around champion Ivan Ivankov of Belarus and world silver medalist Alexei Bondarenko of Russia each earned 9.675.

"I thought at least Csollany should have had a higher score," Ivankov said later. "But I don't want to talk about the judges. I am not finished with gymnastics yet."

Vanessa Atler, the US all-around champion, won the floor exercise Wednesday, wowing the crowd with the difficult tumbling she performed to tango music.

Her 9.775 let her edge Romanian Simona Amanar, who earned 9.725 for a routine that wasn't as well choreographed as Atler's Corina Ungureanu of Romania scored 9.65. Ungureanu took another third on balance beam with a 9.70 the event of Olga Teslenko (Ukraine) at 9.75.

Event finals conclude today with men's parallel bars and high bar.

### Ludmila injured

STOCKHOLM, July 23: Sweden's Olympic champion hurdler Ludmila Engquist will be out of action for a month due to a calf injury, a Swedish athletics spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

The Russian-born world champion will miss the Swedish championships this weekend, a competition in Paris on July 29 and the Stockholm Grand Prix on August 5.

Engquist, who won the 100 metres hurdles at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, hopes to be fit for the European championships in Budapest on August 18-23.

In London, Britain's triple jump world record-holder Ashia Hansen said she was unlikely to be ready for the European championships due to a lingering foot injury.

"The injury has taken a long time to heal because it was four months before it was properly diagnosed as a muscle tear," Hansen said. "Time is against me for the Europeans."

### Brazil's Japan tour called off

TOKYO, July 23: World Cup finalists Brazil, undergoing an intense period of soul-searching after their shock 3-0 loss to France, have cancelled a planned visit to Japan next month, the Japan Football Association (JFA) said today, reports Reuters.

The JFA said in a statement that Brazil had informed it the team could not compete in a match scheduled for August 19 in Osaka against Japan's national team.

"Brazilian football authorities informed us they could not make the visit because the future direction of its team would be under discussion through the end of August," the statement said.

The Brazilians have also asked for a scheduled friendly against South Korea to be postponed until October, citing a need to resolve "internal problems".

Brazil's crushing defeat at the hands of France earlier this month sent the soccer-mad South American nation into mourning, and the media has slated coach Mario Zagallo for his decision to play star striker Ronaldo despite rumours he was ill.

Last week, Brazil said it needed time to name a new technical board for the national team.

The team is expected to appoint a new coach to replace Zagallo, who according to the Brazilian media is negotiating a contract to head the Japanese squad in its preparation for the 2002 finals, to be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea.



DANCING QUEEN: USA's Vanessa Atler going through her graceful motions during the floor exercise at the Goodwill Games on July 22. Atler won the gold medal with a score of 9.775 points. — AFP photo

## Encore! Joyner-Kersey



NEW YORK, July 23 (Reuters): The tears began when the world's greatest female athlete walked on the track for the final race of her final heptathlon.

Jackie Joyner-Kersey wanted to break down then Wednesday night at the Goodwill Games. But there was a job to be done, a 800-metre run to complete before she could call it a heptathlon career.

"It was a great feeling," she said. "It dawned on me that this was it, that this was really it. I won't have to run another 800."

But as she strode to the line you knew, and she knew, this wouldn't be like the concluding movements of one of her four world-record performances in the two-day event, this time there would be suspense of a different kind, this time there was a worry that she might not win.

At the back of the pack she toiled for so long in this final race. So much so that with 150 metres to go she had to give herself a pep-talk.

"Come on, Jackie your legs might be heavy but you have to reach down and go for it," she said to herself.

She did. Not so rapidly, but fast enough to give the crowd butterflies.

In sixth place she finally ventured across the finish line, and the wait began.

Did Jackie win or not? Eventually the word came. By 23 points she had won her final heptathlon, with the best score in the world this year, 6,502 points.

Finally it was over. "To all the fans, it was because of you," she said. "You just kept pushing and pushing me and cheering me on."

On a day when a virus tired to interrupt history, she overcame emotion and illness to triumph one more time.

"I can't believe I won," she said. "It was tough."

Now she will go home to East St. Louis, Illinois, and on Saturday venture over to Edwardsville, Illinois, for one more meeting, one more long jump competition.

Then her illustrious career will be over. "This one, definitely this one," she said when asked which of the dozens of heptathlons she had done in her 18 years of competing — half of her life — was the greatest.

"I had to keep plunging away, keep fighting. Never once did I say I was going to quit, even when it looked like it was going my way I still had to plung."

And she did, until in a post-competition press conference, her husband and coach, Bobby, finally said, "She's finished. She's done."

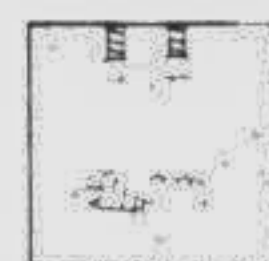
Now she can skip those six-hour workouts and devote time to working with the youth of America and running her marketing firm.

"I'm really going to miss it (track and field), the competition and the cheers," she said. "It's going to be tough for me, but whatever I can do to keep track and field going strong, I'm going to do it. It may not be on the track, but I'll be on the sidelines cheering and motivating people."

The three Olympic gold medals, two in the heptathlon and one in the long jump, and the world records, the last one being 7,291 points at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, will only be part of her legacy.

As her father, Alfred, said Wednesday, "She has the heart of a champion and she showed it," on and off the track.

## Sang's condition unchanged



UNIONDALE, New York, July 23: Injured Chinese gymnast Sang Lan still has no use of her legs and limited movement in her upper body, and doctors said Wednesday they are uncertain about her prognosis, reports Reuters.

Sang, 17, suffered what doctors called an "incomplete" spinal injury when she landed on her neck practising a vault before Tuesday night's Goodwill Games competition at Nassau Coliseum.

Doctors said that while they are hopeful Sang will regain at least limited use of her arms, the uncertainty and instability of an "incomplete" type of injury makes them unable to give an accurate diagnosis.

"I've seen some people recover completely, and I've seen some who didn't make any progress," said Dr Vincent Leone, who treated Sang at Nassau County Medical Centre.

"These injuries usually declare themselves within six

weeks, so we will know more than," Sang remained in critical but stable condition Wednesday in the intensive care unit at the medical centre.

Sang's injury occurred during vault warm-ups before the start of the Goodwill Games event finals, when she appeared to overpower a simple front handspring off the horse.

Instead of landing on her feet, Sang tried to tuck and roll out of the vault but landed on the back of her neck, said Romanian coach Octavian Belo, who witnessed the accident.

Belo said he heard a snap when Sang landed.

Sang was placed on a spinal board stretcher after the fall and taken to the Nassau hospital where she underwent tests and doctors realigned her vertebrae.

Dr Leone said that Sang is receiving treatment with corticosteroids and will undergo spinal fusion, a surgical procedure that will stabilise her spine, in about two days.

In that operation doctors will insert metal pieces in her spine to prevent the bones from sliding on top of one another. The fusion will allow Sang to sit up.

Sang, China's national vault champion, will have to stay in the United States for about one week following the fusion, but will then be allowed to go home to China for rehabilitation.

Goodwill Games officials said Wednesday that they are in contact with the Chinese government and expect Sang's parents to arrive in the United States Friday or Saturday.

Tu Mingde, secretary general of the Chinese Olympic Committee, said Sang told him Wednesday that she still didn't know what exactly happened during the vault.

After the accident she asked her coach whether in the future she can still be a gymnast, Tu said. "She really wished she could stand up."

Doctors praised Sang's spirit.

### Age-group badminton

#### Ankhi clinches singles title

Sports Reporter

Ankhi Halder of Bangladesh Ansars clinched the girls' (under-13) singles title of the national age-group badminton championships with a straight-sets (11-4, 11-8) win over Dinajpur's Samira in the final played at the NSC wooden floor gymnasium yesterday.

In the girls' doubles in the same age-group, Ishita and Jessy from Jessore emerged champions defeating Nilufar and Sharmin of Rangpur.

In the day's other matches, Raisuddin of Ansars and Habib of Bogra booked their berths for the under-14 boys' singles final. In the first semifinal, Raisuddin had an easy sail (15-4, 15-3) over Masud of Rajshahi while Habib tamed Anwar of Chudanga 15-1, 15-2.

Javed of Ansars and Kabir of Dhaka made it to the boys' (under-18) semifinals eliminating Alamgir of Bogra and Ariful of Bhola respectively.

Besides, Nigar Sultana of Ansars defeated Tuhin of Bhola 7-11, 12-11, 11-9 to reach the girls' under-16 final.

#### FA Cup's new identity

LONDON, July 23: The FA Cup, the world's oldest football competition, has a new official name after the Football Association announced a 25 million pound (40 million dollars) four-year sponsorship deal with insurance company AXA Assurance today, reports AFP.

With immediate effect, the competition which began in 1872, will no longer be called the FA Cup sponsored by Littlewoods Pools and will now be known by another mouthful: The AXA-sponsored FA Cup.

AXA have taken over as the FA Cup's sponsor from Littlewoods, who ended their involvement after a three-year association.

The money raised through the deal will be reinvested throughout football, with particular importance placed on grassroots development and women's football, as well as the development of the national stadium.

#### World Cup wash-out

LONDON, July 23 (The Mirror/Internet): World Cup organisers are calling for the 2002 tournament to be rescheduled - to avoid it being a wash-out.

The next World Cup - which is being co-hosted by Japan and South Korea - is in danger of clashing with the monsoon season.

The finals are traditionally held in June and July but the organisers want to miss the rains and move the tournament to September.

However, it would cause chaos to European and South American leagues and a Premiership spokesman said last night: "That would disrupt our league season."

But Chung Moon-joon, head of the South Korean Football Association said: "The rescheduling is an urgent matter that should be decided on by the end of this year at the latest."

The 1998 Summer Olympics in Seoul had to be held in September and the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo were staged in October.

Chung added: "This year, as usual, Japan and South Korea had much rain."

#### Eggen stays at Rosenborg

OSLO, July 23: After a one-year leave, Rosenborg's successful coach Nils Arne Eggen signed a new three-year contract with the club on Wednesday.

Eggen has led Rosenborg to victories over Real Madrid, Porto, Olympiakos in addition to a 2-1 away victory against AC Milan in the Champions League.

Since Eggen went on leave Jan. 1 1997, many clubs and national teams have sought him as coach. Together with former Norwegian national team coach Egil Olsen, he was wanted as the new coach for Scottish Celtic.

"I've been thinking a lot, and after assessing offers from Norwegian and international clubs, I have ended up with Rosenborg. That's probably where I belong," Eggen told Norwegian news agency NTB.

Assistant coach under Eggen, Trond Solledal, has been the best coach in Rosenborg while Eggen has been away, and he has previously said that he it is not an option to be a new assistant coach under Eggen.

Players welcomed Eggen's return. "Nils Arne Eggen is and has been the best coach in Norway for the last ten years. The players want him back so that we can take another step in our development. However, we still want Solledal as a part of the team," said Rosenborg captain Jahn Ivar "Mini" Jakobsen.

# Johnson & co reach new heights



NEW YORK, July 23: World and Olympic 400-metre champion Michael Johnson anchored the United States 4x400-metre relay team to a world record of two minutes and 54.20 seconds Wednesday at the Goodwill Games, reports AFP.

Jerome Young, Antonio Pettigrew, Tyree Washington and Johnson split the only 100,000-dollar athletics world record bonus to be paid from the Goodwill Games five million-dollar prize money pool.

"I didn't want to let these guys down. They put in a lot of hard work before me," Johnson said. "We all felt like we didn't want to waste it."

Johnson had also anchored the former mark of 2:54.29, set in 1993 at Stuttgart, Germany by a US team that also included Andrew Valmon, Quincy Watts and Butch Reynolds.

Johnson ran the final leg unchallenged in 43.1 seconds, ending any doubt he is still slowed by nagging left leg injuries that hampered him the past two months.

"It's great that I have put all that behind me once and for all," Johnson said. "It was tough running out in front but I had the motivation of putting these guy's names on the world record."

Johnson gave calming advice to young just before the start and he responded with an opening leg of 44.4 seconds.

"When you have a 44.4 on the lead off leg you know you are on world-record pace," Johnson said. "When you run that fast out of the blocks you don't want to waste the effort. It was amazing."

Pettigrew took the baton and followed in 43.2. He had sensed the time was right for a world record when Johnson led a US 400m sweep Tuesday.

"I knew we had a chance to break the world record," he said. "Sweeping the 400 made a statement that we could be even

faster. I gave it everything I had. I wanted to come out and do something special."

Washington, ran his leg in 43.5, setting the stage for Johnson. "I knew when I gave it to Michael we had the world record," Washington said. "I saw world record flashing in my eyes."

Two-time Olympic heptathlon champion Jackie Joyner-Kersey won her final competition in the seven-event discipline edging fellow American Dedee Nathan by 23 points in what she called the greatest heptathlon of her legendary career.

"I wanted to break down and start crying. I knew it would be tough," Joyner-Kersey said. "You have to bite down, dig deep and go for it."

Joyner-Kersey, 36, had not competed in a heptathlon since the 1996 Olympics after winning the 1998 and 1992 titles. But she hung on to win and go 4-for-4 in winning Goodwill heptathlons.

"I can't believe it's over. I can't believe the time went so quick," said Bobby Kersey, who like his wife was in tears after the victory.

Maurice Greene, the 100m world champion, outraced 100m world-record holder Donovan Bailey of Canada to anchor a US 4x100m relay victory in 37.90 seconds and avenge a loss to the Canadians at the 1996 Olympics.

"What can I say. The USA is number one," Greene said. "This is a new beginning for the US 4x100." Bailey's response was, "Let them say what they want, we're still coming together as a team."

Paralysed Chinese gymnast Sang Lan, 17, was in guarded condition awaiting spinal fusion surgery Friday that might make her healthy enough to return home within a week, but she is unlikely to ever walk again.

"It's fair to say it would be unlikely," attending doctor Vincent Leone said. "She un-

derstands she has a very serious condition. She's very frustrated. But she hasn't cried much. She's a very tough young lady."

Sang landed on her head while performing a flip during a warm-up for the vaulting competition Tuesday and suffered major spinal cord injuries.

Sygen, an experimental synthetic protein drug designed to help repair nerve damage in paralysis cases, will be used to treat her. The drug helped American football player Dennis Byrd recover from a spinal injury.

"It has yet to be proven completely successful so I have an obligation to the patient to remain skeptical, but we are willing to look at any kind of treatment to help Sang walk again," Leone said.

Russia beat world and Olympic champion Spain 11-5 to win water polo gold but the American's helped by three gymnastics titles, took a 19-17 lead over the Russians in the overall gold medal race.

Romanian officials threatened to withdraw women's gymnasts because two of four judges were from the United States. US women have won four of five possible titles, two Wednesday at the expense of Romanians.

Gymnastics concludes Thursday with two men's event. The day's high point should be basketball finals matching Australia against Puerto Rico and the United States against Lithuania.

Karch Kiraly, winner of the inaugural Olympic beach volleyball title in 1996, and fellow American Adam Johnson opened Goodwill competition with a 15-8 victory over Canada's Mark Heese and John Child.

Brazils world number one duo of Guilherme Marques and Para Ferreira Souza routed Americans Sinjin Smith and Ricci Luyties 15-2. More than 490 tons of sand were trucked to central park from Canada for the event.



EVERGREEN JACKIE: US athletics great Jackie Joyner-Kersey in mid air during her Goodwill Games heptathlon long jump on July 22. — AFP photo