

Unlucky Petit

NICE, France, July 25: World Cup winner Emmanuel Petit postponed his wedding today because police feared the presence of his French teammates among the guests would upset public order, reports Reuters. Petit had been due to tie the knot in the village of Eze, overlooking Monaco, in a quiet ceremony. But the news leaked out and police said they feared crowds of fans would flock to the village to see the nation's soccer heroes. Photographers had been in position outside the town hall since early morning when they were told the Arsenal midfielder had put off the ceremony.



Gordon Greenidge bares his soul: Part II

We could not push the Bangladesh players ... because they were not mentally and physically prepared for this.

Lack of planning responsible for poor performance

Bangladesh cricket coach Gordon Greenidge talks to Al Amin and Hasan Masood.

(Part One of this three-part exclusive interview appeared yesterday)

DS: The board is now trying to find a scapegoat in you. How are you going to explain this?
GG: Well, that is exactly true because since the ICC the board has done nothing. We have done nothing. Now just shortly they have put 'cricket development officers' in areas, which I think we are a year behind than all the other countries that went to the ICC: well, those countries who are looking to advance in international cricket. Scotland is doing this. Kenya is looking much better everytime we play them. Even Ireland are doing much better. They progress in what they are trying to do to establish themselves in international cricket. They are more advanced than what we are doing. But we are the ones who are talking a lot but not doing anything.

DS: About the board, they are trying to buy the Test status...

GG: I think pushing for Test match status is wrong at this present moment. You do not have a structure in Bangladesh to play Test cricket. We do not play that kind of cricket, so how do you expect to compete against other countries? How do you expect to get Test status. Okay, someone may say if we start now then we may get it in three years time. But in three years Bangladesh will still not be ready. Personally, there is no way that Bangladesh cricket with the present system can operate in the Test match level in less than ten years. I give you that and I stand challenge on that. To push forward will be suicidal as far as our cricket is concerned. First you need to establish a better structure in Bangladesh. Three-day or four-day matches has to be introduced so that the players get an understanding of what this is all about. Simply because the players are physically weak, they are mentally weak, they are soft, they lack in cricket knowledge and it does not matter what you do with coaching or training. It's still not going to help because this present type of players simply do not have it in them. It has to start with much younger generations from within the schools. And this programme should be initiated from the education authority, from the Government, right through the schools. Because if you are going to do this you can not expect a school teacher just to give up his free time to take the kids out for two hours of training in the evening after class. So this has to be something initiated right away through the authorities, I mean Government. And that is the only way it has to go. They have to go with a full range of development programme so that when they reach the stage to represent even clubs in Dhaka, they already have grown the understanding. The players do not work regardless of what we do in the net, no one seems to be able to change. Their technique is bad, their footwork is bad and you can not change a 20-year, a 26-year or a 30-year old player. They will not make that change.

DS: Regarding the standard of our players, you had said before the Indian tour last May that they were the best possible side we have...

GG: Yes, you are very correct. I said that simply because they had been playing more cricket and you expected them to represent better. Now the younger players, they seemed to be under more pressure when they play against big name players. You would expect that players who have had a longer opportunity to play cricket would represent themselves better. But this was not true. Okay, you could have chosen a younger team. But, then if you want to say they should have been given experience, fine! But I think that could also be damaging in the long run, on their whole morale and the whole cricket status. Now the players who have been playing for some time in Dhaka at club level, you would have expected them to at least show a little more understanding as to the standard of cricket that we were going to play. But they did not do that. So, the problem is back, where you lose a match and you congratulate the opposition for winning whether you play well or not. ... what is hurting is that there is a defeat, a bad defeat ... the defeat perhaps was there, but I think how we were defeated would have made a difference. But we had opportunities to do better which we didn't. Yet at the conclusion of the match, they did not show that they were remorseful. They did not look hurt, they did not look this way. This is happening here, this is happening in England.

Okay, the condition where we played in England was different for obvious reasons. That is an excuse. We played against India. So? We didn't expect to win then. If that is the attitude, how do you expect to perform credibly? How can you expect a creditable performance if that is the attitude? Because there has to



be an attitude. From the way you see the expression of people's face. That is what you have to determine. So, you could always spot the anxiety and the noise of the people who watch the cricket, who see the results and then view the way the players behave.

DS: You have pointed out many a thing. Now can you focus on where they are lacking?

GG: It's commitment. How can you expect them to show what you ask for ... this commitment? Because simply, when they finish up for the national team where they say they would not get paid. They get lot from the clubs, lot of takas. So they feel more comfortable to represent clubs. That will be no good, but that is obvious. They may not tell you this because I do not believe that the players tell the truth. They do not.

DS: So how do you think that we can solve these problems?
GG: How? I can not tell you how to solve your internal problems or the problems that has been so vibrant for so many years. How you solve the problem? How can you expect the problem to be solved when clubs are stronger than the board? When clubs more or less dominate cricket? The board seems to be secondary. But the difficulty you have is that how you can make a change when the same people who represent the clubs sit on the board's panel?

DS: That is the structure we have...

GG: This is okay to have that. So what I am saying is that... find out first from those players or from those representing what is happening. What are they thinking? Do you honestly tell me that what you are seeing is good to look at when you see the representatives of the clubs, the supporters of the clubs? And when you see that clubs can refuse to play matches because they didn't feel it's the right occasion or time or players were injured and that sort of thing? But, yet the board does not have the authority to do anything about this. Well thank you. So, until that situation changes, we will not get better. So it has to come from within yourselves. Don't talk about what is happening outside. I say get your house in order first before you start criticising other people.

DS: When we asked the dignitaries during our Independence Cup, they also advised the same thing. But after that we are yet to go for that system. How are you going to explain this?

GG: I had explained this. I can explain this. But the clubs don't want it.

DS: If that is the impression given to you by the board, do you think that is the way the board should comply with the clubs' desires?

GG: I feel that the people matters, put their heads together and come up with the plans for the betterment of cricket in Bangladesh. Not for the success of the clubs... I think the emphasis is more on how well the clubs can do, how many trophies they can earn, instead of what to do for the development of cricket within the country nationally ... not at club level. But when you have a situation where the clubs ... they want to win trophies, this is their main aim. Of course, no managing director is going to put money on clubs always losing. But the point is you got a situation where you are looking to develop the sport nationally. But again you can not do this simply because you don't have that communication or that sort of clubs. It's as simple as

that. This has to change but I think the whole situation is like that. We have returned from England, from a tour that was expected to give the players the practice for the World Cup next year. It is true that we did not play well and the few matches that we did win were against not so strong sides, not

DS: Well we usually see a player giving his best in domestic cricket to get chance in the national team. They seem to be very eager to do that. But according to you, there is a rapid change in the attitude of the players. Can you please explain why does it happen?

GG: They are eager... they say they are eager because they have got people pushing forward. They always want to please these persons who are pushing for their inclusion in the team. That's it. That is the situation that is difficult to answer.

If this is the case, why this change of attitude? Why this change of thought now they had been selected? The thing is, getting the players to show more fight is very difficult because it is not the nature of the players... getting the players to commit themselves to their job is very difficult ... that seem to be possible. We have tried all sorts of methods, we have tried talking but again that do not seem to be very easy because they do not speak. And then when they speak, they do not speak the truth. You can not ask them what is happening because they simply look down and do not answer. But yet you will find that a majority of the players will talk among themselves where it doesn't matter... not in the team meetings. If they speak up in the team meetings they will almost repeat everything everyone is saying.

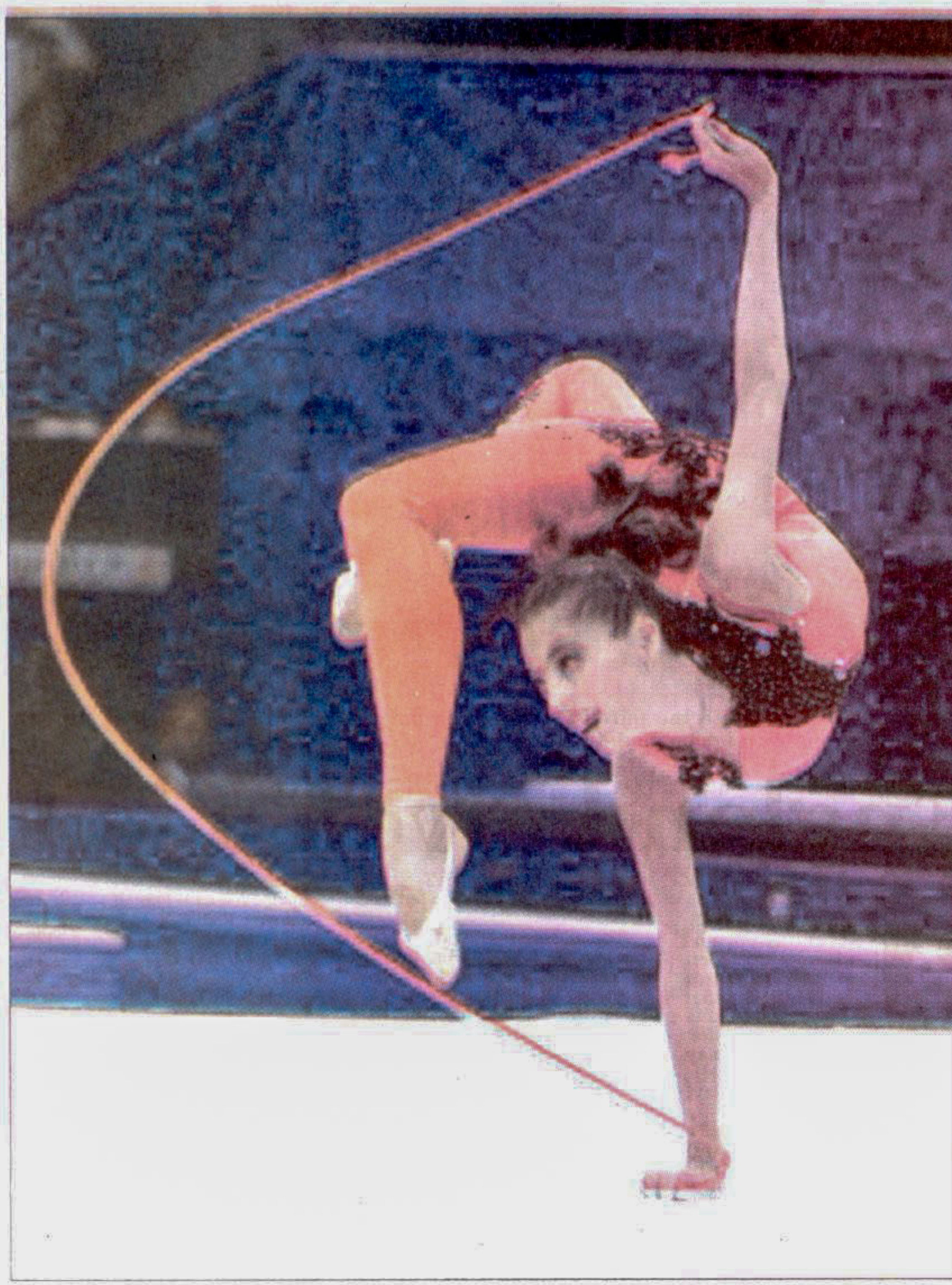
You ask them what was your thought, what were you doing when you were bowling? They will say I was trying to bowl three-quarter. But when you ask what was going on in your head?

And what did you see in the batsman that you were trying to exploit? Nobody can tell you this. This is lack of cricket knowledge. So, if they do not have the thinking how can they put it into practice? Nobody... no coach or manager can give you the thinking. If they do not have this from before, they will not get it and they will not be able to put it into practice.

(Part Three in tomorrow's Daily Star sport)

the full sides that we could play. When we did play those full sides it was obvious that our players were not capable. Does that have anything to do with the coach or the manager? You played in different conditions, yes, but you cannot change the players just like that. I am willing to represent myself as to what happened. We also take some of the blame because we could not push the Bangladesh players as far as the Scottish players were being pushed because they were not mentally and physically prepared for this

They can not do it. They get tired quickly. Sometimes they put up their hands to stop the balls because it hurts. When the ball goes in the air I believe the players hope that the ball doesn't come to him. They say that the ball doesn't come to them. I am hoping this, I am thinking this because you can see that they are not focused on trying to catch this ball because they think the ball might hurt his hand.



GOLDEN SKILLS ON DISPLAY: Gold medalist Yelena Vitrichenko of Ukraine performing with her rope in the final of rhythmic gymnastic's individual exercise at the Goodwill Games on July 24. Yelena won the medal in rope category. — AFP photo

American cagers discover gold

UNIONDALE, New York, July 25: It was a day of surprises for US athletes at the Goodwill Games, reports AP.

From diving to basketball to beach volleyball, they did the unexpected — they won and racked up medals.

Mark Ruiz thought he was in water over his head against the dominating Chinese divers. He

fell short in the 1-meter springboard, but not by nearly as much as he expected.

Ruiz, already the best US platform diver at 19, made his first big splash off the springboard winning the bronze medal behind a pair of Chinese men and ahead of an onrushing German.

And there was no bigger surprise than at Madison Square Garden, where the young US basketball team also won a medal it wasn't supposed to — the gold.

The squad of college undergraduates beat Australia 93-85 in overtime.

It was the first major international men's basketball title for a team of US amateurs since a college all-star team won the World Championship in 1986.

"It's unbelievable, to win a gold medal for the USA. It's the highlight of my life," said Wally Szczerbiak of Miami-Ohio.

Ruiz, who moved to Orlando, Florida, from Puerto Rico six years ago, was in third place after all six rounds, but he said he no clue of his standing.

"I don't ever look at the scoreboard," he said. "I thought I was fourth. All I do is concentrate on my own dives."

If Ruiz had been paying attention, he would have seen Andreas Wels of Germany scoring 72.00 and 73.47 points on his last two dives with a string of 8.0 and 8.5 scores, putting the pressure on Ruiz.

But Ruiz nailed his last dive, a reverse 2 1/2 somersault with a half-twist, scoring 74.40 points to finish with 395.52, just 2.28 ahead of Wels.

Zhou Vilin of China was first after each of the first five dives, but a superb final dive gave world champion Yu Zhoucheng the gold with 426.24 points, just ahead of Zhou's 421.86.

Ruiz was first in this year's national championships and first in the World Championships trials in platform last year before finishing sixth in the world meet. He didn't qualify for either the 1 or 3-meter springboard events.

"I wasn't really a serious springboard diver until this year," he said. "Over the past year, I've done so much better in the springboard, so that now I'm diving consistently. I plan to continue training in all three events."

America's other teenage diving hope, Troy Dumais of Ventura, California, was fifth after three dives before scores of

31.62 and 31.50 in the fourth and fifth rounds. Dumais, 18, second in the 1-meter at this year's world championships, fell to 10th in the 12-man field.

"I didn't have the confidence in myself to do the dives I normally do," Dumais said. "I was thinking stupid thoughts, thinking too much, second-guessing myself."

Dumais said Ruiz was not really far behind the two Chinese men.

"They're dominant because they're consistent," he said. "They believe they're the best. They are so mentally sound. But if Mark had hit two dives that he had 6.5s on, he would've won. He was only 25 or 30 points behind."

Brian Gilloy of Kissimmee, Florida, was fifth with 367.77 points.

Lithuania, which lost to the United States in the semifinals, beat Puerto Rico 119-75 for the basketball bronze medal.

Karch Kiraly and Adam Johnson of the United States will play for a Goodwill Games beach volleyball medal. They narrowly beat the No. 2 US team of Sinjin Smith and Ricci Luyties 16-14 to finish their preliminary group 2-1. Johnson had 24 kills, while Luyties had seven blocks.

The world's top-rated men's team, Guilherme Marques and Para Ferreira of Brazil, rallied from a 6-0 deficit to finish the preliminary rounds unbeaten with a 15-11 victory over Canada's John Child and Mark Heese Friday. Ferreira had seven blocks.

"After 6-0, we still keep our minds concentrating," Marques said. "We changed our game. I did some jump serves and Para made some good blocks. After 6-0, if you lose your mind, you will lose 15-0."

Marques and Ferreira won their first two matches by a combined score of 30-5.

Also advancing to Saturday's semifinals were Julien Prosser and Leo Zahner of Australia, who beat Martin Conde and Esteban Martinez of Argentina 15-7. A 9-point run gave the Australians a 12-4 lead. It was the first loss in three matches for the Argentines, and they reached the semifinals when defending champions Jan Kvalheim and Bjorn Maaseide of Norway lost to Martin and Paul Laciga of Switzerland 16-14.

Rhythmic gymnast Alina Kabayeva of Russia became the Gambia's first quadruple-gold medalist, adding titles in the ribbon, clubs and hoop to her all-around gold. She also took silver in the rope.

The figure skating competition doesn't start for another five days, but it lost a big name Friday when former US national champion Nicole Bobek withdrew. Bobek said she needs more time to recuperate from a nagging injury and to get reacquainted with coach Richard Callaghan.

Pekerman will do for now

BUENOS AIRES, July 25: Argentina youth coach Jose Pekerman was set to step up to take charge of the senior squad and succeed Daniel Passarella after three weeks as caretaker coach following an interview Friday with Argentine Football Association (AFA) president Julio Grondona, reports AFP.

Pekerman's credentials have never been in question as he led the under-20 side to two World Championships playing exciting attacking football.

He was appointed interim coach after Passarella stepped down following Argentina's World Cup quarterfinal defeat by Holland.

Pekerman says he still intends to take the under-20 side to the World Youth Championships next year in Nigeria even if he does land the top job.

Grondona revealed he was well aware that "Pekerman appears to be the people's choice. But I'm not saying if he will be the next coach. A consensus will no doubt emerge in time. But I have asked him if he is willing to take it on," Grondona said.

He added the coach would be allowed to name his own assistant while the AFA would appoint the rest of the technical staff.

"If you consider the AFA's work you will see that Argentina have qualified for all the World Cups since 1974 and so I see no reason for it to change its methods," Grondona explained.

Charity cricket

KARACHI, July 25 (The Dawn/Internet): Pakistan cricketers will face an Indian team in five unofficial 50-over matches next month.

The matches are being organised by a private company, International Management Group (IMG) and will involve top players from both the countries.

Basit Ali will lead a team in two matches to be played in Nairobi, Kenya, on August 7 and 8 against Ajay Jadhava's XI. The matches are being billed as charity games.

From there, the team will proceed to Dubai where they play on August 12. Later they will play matches in Muscat and Bahrain on August 14 and 16 respectively.

The team known as Rashid Latif XI, will play against an Indian side called as Mohammad Azharuddin XI.

Delightful double for Nigar

Nigar Sultana of Bangladesh Ansar emerged Girl's singles champion in the under-16 age group of the national junior and sub-junior badminton championship defeating her teammate Anghi Haldar by 11-2, 11-2, points at the NSC wooden floor gymnasium yesterday, reports UNB.

In the boys' single under-14 group, Habib of Bogra clinched the title beating Raisuddin of Ansar by 15-7, 15-4.

Akhtar and Sultan pair of Chittagong lifted the veteran doubles crown defeating Hafez and Batul of Jessore by 15-11, 18-15 points.

The boys' doubles final (under-8) will be held today, the concluding day of the meet.

Earlier on Friday, Anghi Haldar and Nigar Sultana emerged the girls (U-16) doubles champions while Wasiq and Raisuddin clinched the boys (U-14) doubles title.

In the girls (U-16) doubles final, Anghi and Nigar Sultana of Ansar beat Wahida and Rojmina of Bogra 15-9, 15-7.

In boys (U-14) doubles, Wasiq and Raisuddin of Ansar beat Anwar and Pintu of Chuadanga 15-5, 15-6.

Kabadi league starts tomorrow

The Fifth K M Mainuddin Smriti Premier Kabadi League '98 begins tomorrow at the kabadi court of Outer Stadium, reports UNB.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya will inaugurate the league, organised by Bangladesh Amateur Kabadi Federation.

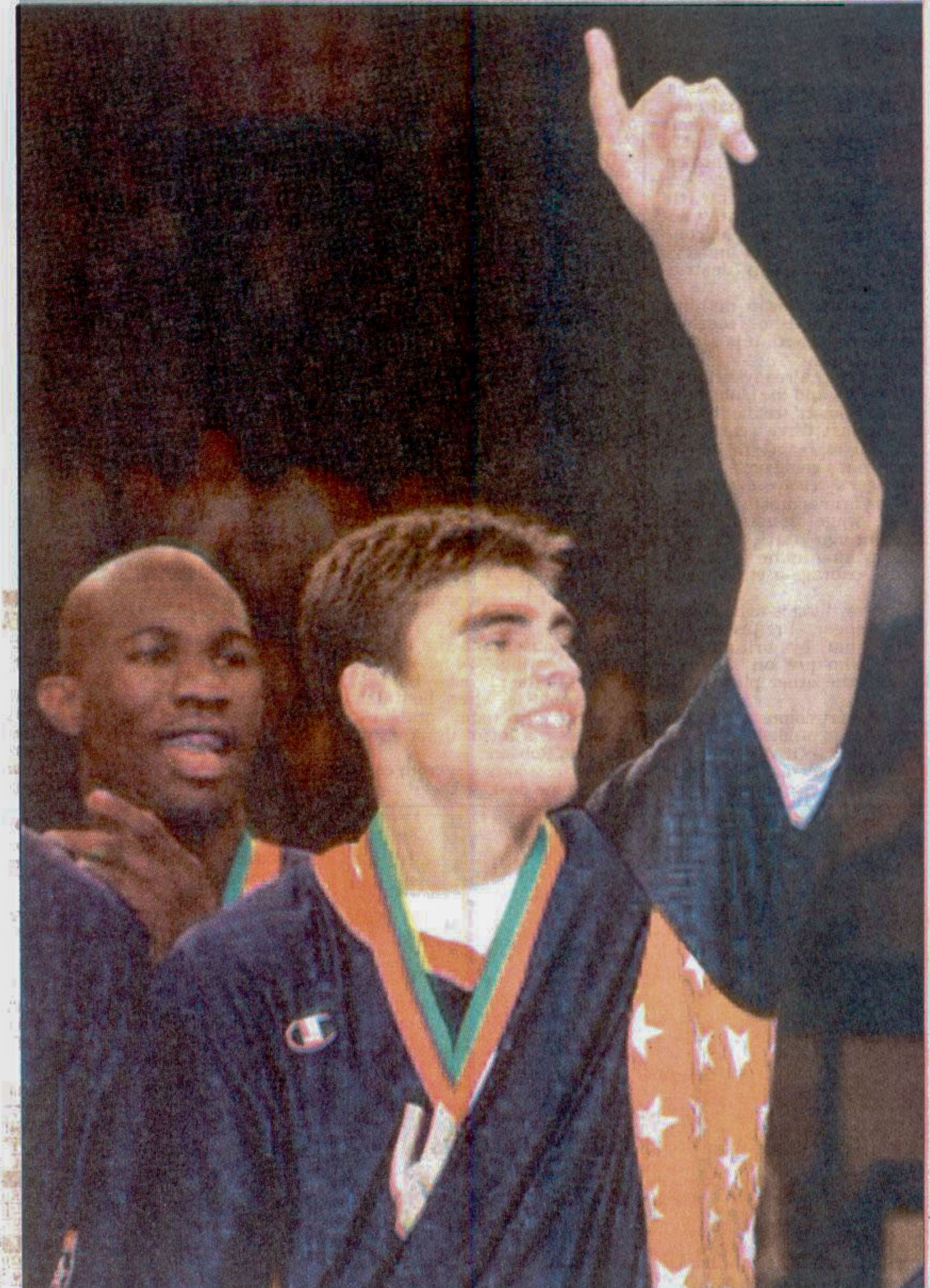
Twenty-four grapplers from three services teams — Bangladesh Ansars, Bangladesh Rifles and Bangladesh Police — are taking part in eight different weight categories meet.

Eight first round matches were decided on the opening day.

Nat'l wrestling

The 22nd national senior Wrestling Championship, organised by Bangladesh Amateur Wrestling Federation, began at the NSC gymnasium yesterday, reports UNB.

President of Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) Mahbubur Rahman inaugurated the four-day meet.



Hil Wally Szczerbiak, a member of the US basketball team who grabbed gold in the Goodwill Games beating Australia, acknowledges the crowd's applause after receiving his medal at Madison Square Garden in New York on July 24. — AFP photo