

## Aussies can't believe it

SYDNEY, July 28: Australian national team coach Geoff Marsh and his World Cup champion players will be astonished if Pakistani cricket legend Wasim Akram is found guilty of match-fixing, reports AFP.

Akram and star batsmen Ijaz Ahmed and Salim Malik have been suspended from the national team by Pakistan's anti-corruption bureau over match-fixing charges.

The Australians, according to Marsh, respect and admire Akram enormously because of his full-throttle approach to cricket and an eagerness to share a drink and a chat after a day's play.

Akram, Malik and Ijaz are ineligible for Pakistan selection until results of an investigation into matches in 1994 against India, New Zealand and South Africa, plus this year's World Cup final, are tabled.

Marsh and former Pakistan captain Imran Khan are stunned.

"Our gut reaction is that we're disappointed Wasim's name has been mentioned because we've got so much respect for him," Marsh said Wednesday.

"Respect for the way he plays and respect for the type of guy he is."

"He's a fierce competitor on the field but afterward, he's usually one of the first to come into our room, shake hands and have a talk."

"We've always regarded him as a really nice bloke and good company ... and it's difficult for us to believe he's guilty of anything."

If found guilty of match-fixing Akram will miss Pakistan's tour of Australia this summer and probably never play international cricket again.

"It would be a very sad thing if that was the case," Marsh said. "We want him here over the summer -- we enjoy playing against him and crowds enjoy watching him."

## Murali extends Lancashire deal

MANCHESTER, England, July 28: Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan today agreed a new two-year contract to stay on as Lancashire's overseas player, reports AFP.

Muralitharan, who only began this season's deal following Sri Lanka's early exit from the World Cup, has claimed 55 wickets in just six English county championship matches.

His superb displays have enabled Lancashire to claim three successive championship victories over Essex, Glamorgan and Hampshire. His miserly bowling at one-day level has also helped his county to the NatWest Trophy quarter-finals and within touching distance of the one-day National League summit.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed my short spell here since the World Cup and I'm delighted to be coming back next year," said Muralitharan.

"The lads have been great and I'm really hoping to be available for much longer and help win something for Lancashire."

Lancashire chairman Jack Simmons claimed: "This is a tremendous signing for the club. Murali is a world class bowler and I hope he will become as much a Lancastrian as Farokh Engineer, Clive Lloyd and Wasim Akram -- I know we've got the best overseas player for the next two seasons."

Murali's return to Old Trafford next season could be interrupted by a projected series between Sri Lanka and South Africa in the middle of next summer, which is yet to be finalised.

## Elenilson grabs 10000m gold

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, July 28: Brazilian Elenilson Silva broke away from a pack in the final 100 metres to win the men's 10,000 metres and veteran US performers dominated the field events at the Pan American Games Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The 22-year-old Silva had been disqualified in the men's 5,000 metres Saturday, then reinstated as the silver medalist. There was no doubt about the colour of his medal this time.

He grabbed the 10,000-metre gold in a lifetime best of 28 minutes, 43.50 seconds to beat the man who was declared the winner of the protest-filled 5,000 metres, Jose Galvan of Mexico.

Galvan took silver this time in 28:44.03 with Peter Julian of the United States claiming the bronze in 28:44.55.

Silva fell to his knees, kissed the track and prayed after his triumph.

"This is the most important victory of my life," said the happy Brazilian.

The United States, meanwhile, picked up three gold medals in the field events.

Three-time Olympian Lance Deal opened the US show by claiming his second consecutive Pan American hammer gold with a throw of 79.61 metres (261 feet, 2 inches). Team-mate Kevin McMahon took the bronze at 73.41 metres (240 feet, 10 inches).

Connie Price-Smith, another three-time US Olympian added to the total with a best of 19.06 metres (62 feet, 6 1/2 inches) in the women's shot.

The third US gold came in the men's pole vault with another 1-2 showing.

Pat Manson claimed the victory with a vault of 5.60 metres (18 feet, 4 1/2 inches). Countryman Scott Henning was 5 centimetres (2 inches) behind for the silver.

## Akram talks to PCB chief

ISLAMABAD, July 28: Suspended Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram returned from London Tuesday and immediately held a meeting with the country's cricket boss over a match fixing row, officials said, reports AFP.

The 32-year-old pace bowler, who had been due to arrive on Wednesday, flew into Islamabad early after a brief stop over at Karachi for "important" talks with Mujibur Rehman, chairman of the ad hoc committee of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), his family said.

Officials here said the meeting, requested by Akram, lasted 20 minutes.

Akram put his point of view and "I listened to him patiently," Rehman told AFP, indicating the brief session remained inconclusive.

The chairman said he had asked Akram to contact the government's Accountability Bureau and clarify the charges.

"Akram assured me of full cooperation and said he was ready to prove the allegations wrong," Rehman added.

He refused to reveal details of the outcome of the talks, saying the matter was now between Akram and the Accountability Bureau.

Rehman's newly-appointed committee last weekend suspended Akram and two other players, Ijaz Ahmed and Salim Malik, from the national team over match-fixing charges, which were stepped up after Pakistan lost to Australia the World Cup final in England on June 20.

The suspension followed charges framed by the Accountability Bureau against Akram and his two colleagues on the basis of an interim report of a PCB inquiry committee which in September last year had implicated the trio in match-fixing.

The bureau has also initiated a probe into the on and off-field activities of the players during the World Cup. Its chief, Senator Saifur Rehman, said on Sunday the bureau had obtained concrete proof of "immoral" practices by the players during the tournament.

The bureau would finalise its report soon, he added.

Akram had stayed back in England after his team's dismal performance against Australia, which triggered protests with angry fans burning effigies of national players calling them "traitors and gamblers."

He said his engagements with a cricket league and commitment as television commentator during the England versus New Zealand Test series delayed his return last month.

Akram told AFP from England on Monday that he was "disappointed" over the charge but he was confident of fighting it. He also ruled out any plans to retire.

Sources said Malik and several other players on Monday met with Rehman, who told them that he would not tolerate any indisipline.

The players are also facing a judicial inquiry headed by Lahore High Court judge, Malik Mohammad Quayum, who is expected to finalise his findings in August.

Pakistani cricket stars have repeatedly denied the charges.

ready to prove the allegations wrong," Rehman added.

He refused to reveal details of the outcome of the talks, saying the matter was now between Akram and the Accountability Bureau.

Rehman's newly-appointed committee last weekend suspended Akram and two other players, Ijaz Ahmed and Salim Malik, from the national team over match-fixing charges, which were stepped up after Pakistan lost to Australia the World Cup final in England on June 20.

The suspension followed charges framed by the Accountability Bureau against Akram and his two colleagues on the basis of an interim report of a PCB inquiry committee which in September last year had implicated the trio in match-fixing.

The bureau has also initiated a probe into the on and off-field activities of the players during the World Cup. Its chief, Senator Saifur Rehman, said on Sunday the bureau had obtained concrete proof of "immoral" practices by the players during the tournament.

The bureau would finalise its report soon, he added.

Akram had stayed back in England after his team's dismal performance against Australia, which triggered protests with angry fans burning effigies of national players calling them "traitors and gamblers."

He said his engagements with a cricket league and commitment as television commentator during the England versus New Zealand Test series delayed his return last month.

Akram told AFP from England on Monday that he was "disappointed" over the charge but he was confident of fighting it. He also ruled out any plans to retire.

Sources said Malik and several other players on Monday met with Rehman, who told them that he would not tolerate any indisipline.

The players are also facing a judicial inquiry headed by Lahore High Court judge, Malik Mohammad Quayum, who is expected to finalise his findings in August.

Pakistani cricket stars have repeatedly denied the charges.

ready to prove the allegations wrong," Rehman added.

He refused to reveal details of the outcome of the talks, saying the matter was now between Akram and the Accountability Bureau.

Rehman's newly-appointed committee last weekend suspended Akram and two other players, Ijaz Ahmed and Salim Malik, from the national team over match-fixing charges, which were stepped up after Pakistan lost to Australia the World Cup final in England on June 20.

The suspension followed charges framed by the Accountability Bureau against Akram and his two colleagues on the basis of an interim report of a PCB inquiry committee which in September last year had implicated the trio in match-fixing.

The bureau has also initiated a probe into the on and off-field activities of the players during the World Cup. Its chief, Senator Saifur Rehman, said on Sunday the bureau had obtained concrete proof of "immoral" practices by the players during the tournament.

The bureau would finalise its report soon, he added.

Akram had stayed back in England after his team's dismal performance against Australia, which triggered protests with angry fans burning effigies of national players calling them "traitors and gamblers."

He said his engagements with a cricket league and commitment as television commentator during the England versus New Zealand Test series delayed his return last month.

Akram told AFP from England on Monday that he was "disappointed" over the charge but he was confident of fighting it. He also ruled out any plans to retire.

Sources said Malik and several other players on Monday met with Rehman, who told them that he would not tolerate any indisipline.

The players are also facing a judicial inquiry headed by Lahore High Court judge, Malik Mohammad Quayum, who is expected to finalise his findings in August.

Pakistani cricket stars have repeatedly denied the charges.

## Karim calls it a day

NAIROBI, July 28 (Reuters/AFP): Asif Karim, Kenya's captain at this year's World Cup, announced his retirement on Wednesday from international cricket.

All-rounder Karim told a news conference he had considered retirement before the World Cup but had been asked to stay on by the Kenya Cricket Association (KCA).

"After captaining Kenya at the World Cup, I have reviewed the issue of retirement with my parents, family and well wishers and I have decided to retire from international cricket," he said.

A veteran of 30 one-day internationals and captain since Kenya attained one-day status in 1997, the 36-year-old Karim said he had decided to make way for younger players.

"I feel the time has now come for the younger and fringe players to have a shot at international cricket and steer Kenya to greater cricketing heights in the new millennium," he said.

After sensationally beating the West Indies at the 1996 World Cup in India, Kenya lost all five of their games at this year's World Cup in England.

His retirement comes at a time of transition in Kenya's cricket management. KCA officials also announced the replacement of coach and former

West Indian batsman Alvin Kalicharan with Indian Sandip Patil.

It is the second spell as coach for Patil, a former Indian Test player. He will take charge on August 1, with his first challenge the four nation tournament against South Africa, India and Zimbabwe in Nairobi from September 25 to October 4.

Kalicharan will help to oversee Kenya's under-19 team in next year's World Youth Cup in Sri Lanka.

Patil had led Kenya to the last ICC Trophy tournament in Malaysia in 1997 but quit halfway through his term. He was believed to have differed with Karim over team selection.

Long before the final whistle blew, the Mexican fans began booing the local side, impatient with their team's complacency after taking a 2-0 halftime lead.

"It's logical for them to react that way," Mexican coach Manuel Lapuente said of the crowd's reaction. "It's up to us to try harder and do something to please them."

Mexico opened the scoring in the 15th minute when Pavel Pardo, fed into the box by a flicked on ball from Cuauhtemoc Blanco, slammed a right-footed shot that glanced off the crossbar and into the back of the net defended by Essam El Hadary.

In the 26th minute Jose Manuel Abundis scored his second goal of the tournament with a glancing header off a corner kick from German Villa.

Mexico appeared coasting to semifinals berth in the FIFA tournament when Egypt's Yasser Radwan was sent off at the 64th minute after receiving his second yellow card from South Korean referee Yung Joo Kim.

But the Egyptians refused to fold. Hassan Ahmed slotted home a close-range shot after Mexican keeper Jorge Campos failed to clear a free kick that rebounded off the crossbar.

With the impatient Mexican crowd booing the home team, Egypt got the equaliser at the 85th minute when Samir Ibrahim filled in a free kick inside the near post from 30 meters past a poorly positioned three-man wall.

"The second half there were some changes in tactics," Egyptian coach Mahmoud Al-Gohary told reporters. "The team's spirits were greatly lifted."

In the earlier match, neither Bolivia nor Saudia Arabia seemed capable of mounting a serious threat to their opponent's goal.

The closest either team came to scoring came at the 90th minute when the Saudi's Ibrahim Al Shahran snatched a close-range header off the near post.

Meanwhile, the Bolivians were unable to puncture the Saudi defence that was obliterated by Mexico on Sunday in the Saudi's 5-1 loss to the host.

Long before the final whistle blew, the Mexican fans began booing the local side, impatient with their team's complacency after taking a 2-0 halftime lead.

"It's logical for them to react that way," Mexican coach Manuel Lapuente said of the crowd's reaction. "It's up to us to try harder and do something to please them."

Mexico opened the scoring in the 15th minute when Pavel Pardo, fed into the box by a flicked on ball from Cuauhtemoc Blanco, slammed a right-footed shot that glanced off the crossbar and into the back of the net defended by Essam El Hadary.

In the 26th minute Jose Manuel Abundis scored his second goal of the tournament with a glancing header off a corner kick from German Villa.

Mexico appeared coasting to semifinals berth in the FIFA tournament when Egypt's Yasser Radwan was sent off at the 64th minute after receiving his second yellow card from South Korean referee Yung Joo Kim.

But the Egyptians refused to fold. Hassan Ahmed slotted home a close-range shot after Mexican keeper Jorge Campos failed to clear a free kick that rebounded off the crossbar.

With the impatient Mexican crowd booing the home team, Egypt got the equaliser at the 85th minute when Samir Ibrahim filled in a free kick inside the near post from 30 meters past a poorly positioned three-man wall.

"The second half there were some changes in tactics," Egyptian coach Mahmoud Al-Gohary told reporters. "The team's spirits were greatly lifted."



Samir Ibrahim (R) of Egypt making a sliding tackle on Mexico's Francisco Palencia during their Confederations' Cup clash at Mexico City on July 27. — AFP photo

## Hosts held by Egypt



MEXICO CITY, July 28: Egypt clawed back from a two-goal deficit to gain a 2-2 tie on Tuesday against host Mexico despite being a man down much of the second half in a Confederations Cup soccer tournament match, reports Reuters.

In an earlier Group A match on Tuesday, Bolivia and Saudia Arabia played to a lackluster 0-0 draw. Mexico leads the group with four points after two games but all four sides have a shot at the semifinal with one match each remaining.

The Group B teams, which resume play today in Guadalajara, are Brazil, Germany, the United States and New Zealand.

MEXICO-EGYPT  
"The Egyptians gained the respect of the 65,000 crowd in Mexico City's Azteca Stadium and were cheered as they walked off the pitch at the end of the scrappy match."

Long before the final whistle blew, the Mexican fans began booing the local side, impatient with their team's complacency after taking a 2-0 halftime lead.

"It's logical for them to react that way," Mexican coach Manuel Lapuente said of the crowd's reaction. "It's up to us to try harder and do something to please them."

Mexico opened the scoring in the 15th minute when Pavel Pardo, fed into the box by a flicked on ball from Cuauhtemoc Blanco, slammed a right-footed shot that glanced off the crossbar and into the back of the net defended by Essam El Hadary.

In the 26th minute Jose Manuel Abundis scored his second goal of the tournament with a glancing header off a corner kick from German Villa.

Mexico appeared coasting to semifinals berth in the FIFA tournament when Egypt's Yasser Radwan was sent off at the 64th minute after receiving his second yellow card from South Korean referee Yung Joo Kim.

But the Egyptians refused to fold. Hassan Ahmed slotted home a close-range shot after Mexican keeper Jorge Campos failed to clear a free kick that rebounded off the crossbar.

With the impatient Mexican crowd booing the home team, Egypt got the equaliser at the 85th minute when Samir Ibrahim filled in a free kick inside the near post from 30 meters past a poorly positioned three-man wall.

"The second half there were some changes in tactics," Egyptian coach Mahmoud Al-Gohary told reporters. "The team's spirits were greatly lifted."

In the earlier match, neither Bolivia nor Saudia Arabia seemed capable of mounting a serious threat to their opponent's goal.

The closest either team came to scoring came at the 90th minute when the Saudi's Ibrahim Al Shahran snatched a close-range header off the near post.

Meanwhile, the Bolivians were unable to puncture the Saudi defence that was obliterated by Mexico on Sunday in the Saudi's 5-1 loss to the host.

Long before the final whistle blew, the Mexican fans began booing the local side, impatient with their team's complacency after taking a 2-0 halftime lead.

"It's logical for them to react that way," Mexican coach Manuel Lapuente said of the crowd's reaction. "It's up to us to try harder and do something to please them."

Mexico opened the scoring in the 15th minute when Pavel Pardo, fed into the box by a flicked on ball from Cuauhtemoc Blanco, slammed a right-footed shot that glanced off the crossbar and into the back of the net defended by Essam El Hadary.

In the 26th minute Jose Manuel Abundis scored his second goal of the tournament with a glancing header off a corner kick from German Villa.

Mexico appeared coasting to semifinals berth in the FIFA tournament when Egypt's Yasser Radwan was sent off at the 64th minute after receiving his second yellow card from South Korean referee Yung Joo Kim.

But the Egyptians refused to fold. Hassan Ahmed slotted home a close-range shot after Mexican keeper Jorge Campos failed to clear a free kick that rebounded off the crossbar.

With the impatient Mexican crowd booing the home team, Egypt got the equaliser at the 85th minute when Samir Ibrahim filled in a free kick inside the near post from 30 meters past a poorly positioned three-man wall.

"The second half there were some changes in tactics," Egyptian coach Mahmoud Al-Gohary told reporters. "The team's spirits were greatly lifted."

In the earlier match, neither Bolivia nor Saudia Arabia seemed capable of mounting a serious threat to their opponent's goal.

The closest either team came to scoring came at the 90th minute when the Saudi's Ibrahim Al Shahran snatched a close-range header off the near post.

Meanwhile, the Bolivians were unable to puncture the Saudi defence that was obliterated by Mexico on Sunday in the Saudi's 5-1 loss to the host.

Long before the final whistle blew, the Mexican fans began booing the local side, impatient with their team's complacency after taking a 2-0 halftime lead.

"It's logical for them to react that way," Mexican coach Manuel Lapuente said of the crowd's reaction. "It's up to us to try harder and do something to please them."

Mexico opened the scoring in the 15th minute when Pavel Pardo, fed into the box by a flicked on ball from Cuauhtemoc Blanco, slammed a right-footed shot that glanced off the crossbar and into the back of the net defended by Essam El Hadary.

In the 26th minute Jose Manuel Abundis scored his second goal of the tournament with a glancing header off a corner kick from German Villa.

Mexico appeared coasting to semifinals berth in the FIFA tournament when Egypt's Yasser Radwan was sent off at the 64th minute after receiving his second yellow card from South Korean referee Yung Joo Kim.

But the Egyptians refused to fold. Hassan Ahmed slotted home a close-range shot after Mexican keeper Jorge Campos failed to clear a free kick that rebounded off the crossbar.

With the impatient Mexican crowd booing the home team, Egypt got the equaliser at the 85th minute when Samir Ibrahim filled in a free kick inside the near post from 30 meters past a poorly positioned three-man wall.

"The second half there were some changes in tactics," Egyptian coach Mahmoud Al-Gohary told reporters. "The team's spirits were greatly lifted."

In the earlier match, neither Bolivia nor Saudia Arabia seemed capable of mounting a serious threat to their opponent's goal.

The closest either team came to scoring came at the 90th minute when the Saudi's Ibrahim Al Shahran snatched a close-range header off the near post.

Meanwhile, the Bolivians were unable to puncture the Saudi defence that was obliterated by Mexico on Sunday in the Saudi's 5-1 loss to the host.

Long before the final whistle blew, the Mexican fans began booing the local side, impatient with their team's complacency after taking a 2-0 halftime lead.

"It's logical for them to react that way," Mexican coach Manuel Lapuente said of the crowd's reaction. "It's up to us to try harder and do something to please them."

Mexico opened the scoring in the 15th minute when Pavel Pardo, fed into the box by a flicked on ball from Cuauhtemoc Blanco, slammed a right-footed shot that glanced off the crossbar and into the back of the net defended by Essam El Hadary.

In the 26th minute Jose Manuel Abundis scored his second goal of the tournament with a glancing header off a corner kick from German Villa.

Mexico appeared coasting to semifinals berth in the FIFA tournament when Egypt's Yasser Radwan was sent off at the 64th minute after receiving his second yellow card from South Korean referee Yung Joo Kim.

But the Egyptians refused to fold. Hassan Ahmed slotted home a close-range shot after Mexican keeper Jorge Campos failed to clear a free kick that rebounded off the crossbar.

With the impatient Mexican crowd booing the home team, Egypt got the equaliser at the 85th minute when Samir Ibrahim filled in a free kick inside the near post from 30 meters past a poorly positioned three-man wall.

team Egypt tied Bolivia 2-2 on Sunday.

STANDINGS  
FIFA Confederations' Cup results and standing after Tuesday's games. Top two teams from each group qualify for semifinals.

Group A  
Team P W D L GF-GA Pts  
Mexico 2 1 1 0 7:3 4  
Bolivia 2 0 2 0 2:2 2  
Egypt 2 0 2 0 4:4 2  
S Arabia 2 0 1 1 1:5 1

Results: July 25 — Mexico 5 Saudi Arabia 1, Bolivia 2 Egypt 2; July 27 — Mexico 2 Egypt 2, Bolivia 0 Saudia Arabia 0.

Remaining matches: July 29 — Egypt v Saudia Arabia, Bolivia v Mexico.

Group B  
Team P W D L GF-GA Pts  
Brazil 1 1 0 0 4:0 3  
USA 1 0 0 0 2:1 3  
New Zealand 1 0 0 1 1:2 0  
Germany 1 0 0 1 0:4 0

Results: July 24 — Brazil 4 Germany 0, United States 2 New Zealand 1.

Remaining matches: July 28 — Germany v New Zealand, Brazil v United States; July 30 — United States v Germany, New Zealand v Brazil.

Div II hockey  
Barnak Samaj crushed Dhaka Hockey Club 10-0 in the Green Delta Metropolis Second Division hockey league at the Moulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

The winners led the first half 5-0.

Mamun and Zahidul scored three goals each while Anwar, Raju, Imran and Delwar netted one apiece for the winners.

In another match, Dhaka Young Stars Club beat Shantinagar Club 2-1 at the same venue.

After a barren first half, Rabbi put Young Stars ahead in the 49th minute while Yousof doubled the margin in the 67th minute.

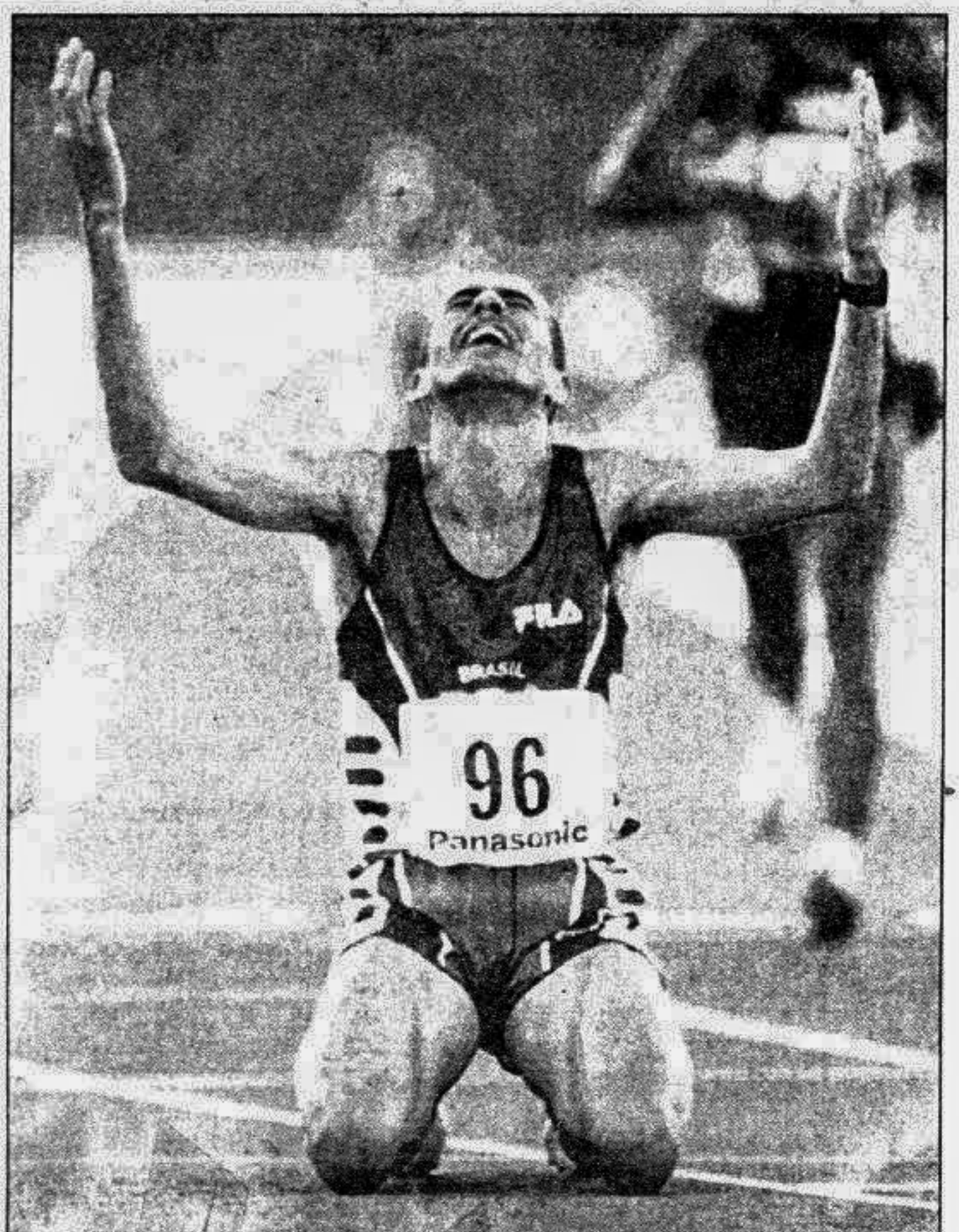
Sabbir pulled one back for Shantinagar Club in the 69th minute.

TODAY'S MATCHES  
Dhaka Wanderers Club vs Mukta Bihanga Turan Sangha (2:30 pm), Dilkusha SC vs PWD SC (4 pm).

US world champs to play in Australia  
MELBOURNE, Australia, July 28: Australia will host the World Cup-winning United States women's football team in December, reports AFP.

The Americans will contest a round-robin series against Australia, former world champions Norway and the Czech Republic, with the venues yet to be decided from December 3-12.

The United States beat China 5-4 on penalties to win the World Cup final before a 90,185 crowd at Pasadena's Rose Bowl on July 10.



Brazil's Elenilson Silva doesn't hide his feelings after winning the men's 10,000 metres gold at the PanAm Games on July 27. — AFP photo

## Excitement mounts in France

PARIS, July 28: The impending return of the French football season has whetted fans' appetites ahead of Friday's opening matches with season ticket sales having soared to record heights, reports AFP.

Last season's runners up Marseille have sold more than 40,000 ahead of their opening match Saturday against promoted Sedan while champions Bordeaux have seen a rush on their season tickets with 15,000 sold — almost double a year ago.

Paris Saint Germain supporters also expect great things from their fallen giants after last season's dismal midtable showing — the club has sold 25,000 season tickets and served notice it intends to be in the title race after buying Bordeaux's talented midfield playmaker Ali Benarbia.

The rush on tickets shows that French football continues to benefit from the euphoria generated by the 1998 World Cup.

The high level of interest will doubtless be maintained as several sides are ready to challenge for Bordeaux's crown.

Marseille, without a championship since 1992, will look to go one better than last season's runners-up spot, Bordeaux will themselves be in contention as will PSG, Lyon and Monaco.

Lyon, third last time out and in the Champions League preliminaries, have turned into the big spenders after splashing

but some 15 million dollars on former Monaco star Sonny Anderson from Barcelona and French international striker Tony Vairelles from Lens for another 10 million.

"We are going for the title. No question," said coach Bernard Lacombe, who has also snapped up midfielder Pierre Leagle from Italian side Sampdoria.

Lyon, who have backing from media group Pathe, have never won the title but their current squad on paper looks capable of living with the best.

Marseille appear not to be on the most even of keels as they approach the season, with striker Florian Maurice still pondering a mooted move to Real Madrid while fellow French international Christophe Dugary faces a six-month ban after testing positive for banned anabolic steroid Nandrolone.