

## Surrey stage recovery

LONDON, Aug 20: Runaway county championship leaders Surrey were reduced to 36 for five before Adam Hollioake and Martin Bicknell forged a recovery to lead the side to 224 all out against Sussex at Hove on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The first day of the match had been washed out, but when play finally began, Surrey missed their test batsmen Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe, who were on duty for England.

Half the side went cheaply before all-rounder Hollioake led a revival. He made 61, paceman Bicknell chipped in with 67 and the leaders reached a respectable total.

Sussex were 99 for two at close, both wickets going to Saqlain Mushtaq.

Leicestershire, 41 points behind them and also frustrated by a lost day on Wednesday, managed only 228 against Middlesex, who were 16 for no wicket at close.

Fourth-placed Yorkshire had a bad day against their great rivals Lancashire, who bowled them out for 67, Richard Green taking four for 21.

Kent, in third place, fared better in piling up 504 against Somerset, with half-centuries from five players.

The bottom club Glamorgan built a big first innings lead with 416 for two against Nottinghamshire and centuries from South African Jacques Kallis (101), Steve James (172 not out) and Michael Powell (127 not out).

Glamorgan had let their visitors off the hook the previous day, allowing them to total 228 after losing six wickets for nine runs.

## Bad weather keeps Bula waiting

LONDON, Aug 20: Bad weather has forced ace swimmer Bula Chowdhury to postpone her two-way swim of the English Channel scheduled to day by at least a couple of days, reports PTI.

There is no chance of the swimming taking place today or tomorrow. If weather improves she will take the plunge on Sunday, her manager Nishith Ganguly told PTI here.

He said the Channel Swimming Association, pilot boat and coast guards would not allow a two way swim unless there is at least 24-hour good weather.

Twenty three year old Bula had successfully crossed the English Channel from Dover to France a decade ago.

## Dutch sprinter tests positive

SEVILLE, Aug 20: Dutch sprinter Troy Douglas has been withdrawn from the World Championships starting in Seville on Saturday after testing positive for the banned anabolic steroid nandrolone.

Dutch athletics sources said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The sources said Douglas, who formerly competed for Bermuda, had failed a dope test recently. An International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) spokesman said the world governing body knew nothing about the case.

Douglas, 36, ran for the Netherlands in last year's European championships in Budapest. He was disqualified after finishing fourth in a photo-finish for using abusive language.

He is the latest in a spate of positive tests for nandrolone in a variety of sports.

On Wednesday, Jamaican sprinter Merlene Ottey, 39, withdrew from the championships after a positive test for nandrolone. Ottey, who had won a record 14 world championships medals, protested her innocence and said she would fight to clear her name.

Britain's 1992 Barcelona Olympic 100 metres gold medalist Linford Christie, 39, has also tested positive for nandrolone after finishing fourth in an indoor meeting in Darmstadt, Germany, last Friday.

Another Briton, European 200 metres champion Doug Walker, has also tested positive for nandrolone this year. He was cleared by the British governing body but the IAAF has upheld the original suspension.

The positive tests have overshadowed the championships and embarrassed the governing body.

On Thursday IAAF president Primo Nebiolo asked supporters to ignore the drugs furore and concentrate on the high-class competition in prospect in Seville.

But his attempts to defuse the controversies looked doomed to failure with yet another positive test just two days before the championships start.

## Sampars moves into qtrs

INDIANAPOLIS, Aug 20: World number one Pete Sampars received treatment for a sore arm during his third-round match against Belarusian Max Mirnyi on Thursday, but won a 7-6 (7-4), 6-3 decision to move into the RCA Championships quarterfinals, reports Reuters.

"It's dead, there's no question, my arms a little tired," said Sampars, who will play fellow American Vince Spadea in the quarters. "The trainer just put a little hot cream on it and that's pretty much it."

A sore shoulder sidelined second-seeded Patrick Rafter of Australia, who won a 7-6 (7-5), 6-2 third-round victory over Canadian Daniel Nestor and then withdrew from the event, promising to return to Indianapolis next year.



The Olympic Stadium in Seville, Spain where the World Athletics Championships open today. — AFP photo

## Athletes urged to stay focused

## World C'ships open today



SEVILLE, Aug 20: World athletics chief Primo Nebiolo urged fans yesterday to forget about drugs and concentrate on the World Championships but despite his plea the doping debate dominated the run-up to Saturday's opening day. It is impossible to keep positive drugs tests confidential for long because of media leaks and believe in announcing and suspending athletes early in the process. A proposal to delay suspensions was rejected.

But the fact that IAAF chiefs believe athletes are completely responsible for banned substances in their body, even if they may have got there by accident, worried British chief David Moorcroft, who has faced two major drug cases in recent months.

The former world 10,000 metres record holder attacked the system.

The new reality is that, rather than a system which is defending innocent athletes, it is defending an imperfect system," said Moorcroft who has seen European 200 metres champion Doug Walker endure a drug scandal recently in addition to Christie's positive test.

"The imperfections are in the science. Science is very accurate at discovering whether a prohibited substance is present but it is less than accurate in determining how it got there.

"At the moment the authorities' position is that it does not matter how it got there, it is there. If it got there from an innocent substance, or it got there from fruit and nut (chocolate),

then that's your problem.

Moorcroft said the present uncertainty adversely affected athletes.

"The knock-on effect of that is that at that point the athlete is suspended. The impact of suspension is massive. The stigma attached to suspension is huge and it is very difficult to undo that."

"We rattle on about innocence until proven otherwise. But the reality is it is big, big news. It is almost bigger news than murder. And the athlete has to suffer the consequences of that, be they innocent or guilty."

Nebiolo said Ottey had been an elite performer for most of the last two decades. But he added: "We can emerge stronger. We showed we have the courage of our convictions. If they are guilty then they will be punished, no problem about that."

In a further echo of the doping problem, the congress rejected a proposal from Germany's Helmut Digel to start the world record book afresh in the new millennium.

Digel has been campaigning to erase records he believes are drug-tainted and wanted the congress to agree to scrub some current marks and start again next century with the best marks achieved this year.

The congress did turn its mind to other matters on Thursday and toughened the regulations applying to athletes who change countries.

In future athletes will need citizenship rather than residency to qualify for another country's team.

They will also have to endure a three-year wait before competing for their adopted country at a major championship. The gap can be reduced to a year if both federations involved agree.

## Pan Pacifics promise much

SYDNEY, Aug 20: Jenny Thompson and Susie O'Neill are chasing swim equivalents of Bob Beamon's

leap into the 21st century, aiming to break the sport's most enduring records in the final major meet of the millennium, reports AP.

Mary T Meagher's 1981 records for the 100 and 200-metre butterfly events are two of at least a half-dozen individual world records which will come under serious threat at the Pan Pacific Championships starting Sunday.

American backstroker Lenny Krayzelburg is aiming for a record double next week after two brilliant swims over 100 and 200 at the US nationals.

He says he aims to stop the world record questions by getting them as quick as possible.

"That's the plan. I'm ready to go my best times and I think my best times now are world-record times," Krayzelburg said.

There is an 18,000 dollar bonus on offer to the first man and woman to break a world record in the Olympic pool, but such is the hype that Krayzelburg believes there is no chance the cash will last until his 100 final on day three.

"It's not about the money anyway," Krayzelburg said. "But there's going to be a lot of great athletes at this meet who could put up a record above me."

Australian head coach Don Talbot tried to ease the pressure

young kids would be coming along and not even think twice about going that fast."

The records she put up then became a barrier for her.

"I thought I'd break them a couple more times," she said. "I swam for seven more years and I can't believe it and it saddens me to this day that I never broke them."

"I don't think it's fair to put any pressure on these guys. At the end of the day it's a special little bonus, it's not that important."

Talbot agrees that world records are of lesser importance than medals.

"World records are fairly transient things," Talbot said.

"They were absolutely phenomenal performances at the time," said US women's coach Richard Quick of Meagher's results.

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"For anyone to approach those records is quite a feat and I think it would be a major milestone in swimming history."

"I know that the more I talk about it it's not going to make it any easier," the Australian said. "It's something I'd love to get but I can talk about it until the cows come home and I don't think that'll get me any closer."

Meagher, now known under her married name of Mary Plant, has watched her records endure longer than her interest in competitive swimming.

"I never thought they'd last this long," Plant said in a telephone interview. "I thought after I'd been out of the sport for a couple of years a whole slew of

Michael Klim, Australia's reigning world record holder for the 100m butterfly, poses at the Sydney International Aquatic Centre on August 19.

## Sport

### World chess

#### Khalifman to meet Akopian in finals

LAS VEGAS, Aug 20: Mid-night finally arrived for Romania's Liviu Nisipeanu on Thursday as the Cinderella of the World Chess Championship was eliminated by Alexander Khalifman, reports AP.

Khalifman of Russia advanced to the finals after winning both games of the semi-final round playoffs in the month-long tournament being held at Caesars Palace here.

Nisipeanu, considered an underdog, forced this tie-break with a dramatic win Wednesday that evened the semifinals at two points each. Those games could each have lasted up to seven hours.

Thursday's tiebreaker contests were limited to one hour.

In the first game, the 33-year-old Khalifman dominated his opponent, who is 10 years his junior. The Russian forced a position where the Romanian could hardly move any of his pieces.

Nisipeanu decided to sacrifice a knight to gain some activity, but his position steadily deteriorated. After this loss, he was again faced with a must-win situation in the second game.

In this game, the underdog played a wonderful series of opening moves to gain a position where he could force a victory.

The Grand Masters competing on the game were preparing for another set of playoff matches, but, for the first time in this event, Nisipeanu's nerves failed him. He made an inexact move and then a serious mistake. This was enough for the Russian to force a draw and move into the finals.

Khalifman will play Vladimir Akopian of Armenia in a six-game match, beginning Sunday, that will determine who will receive 660,000 dollars and the World Championship. The loser will receive 396,000 dollars while Nisipeanu will take home 172,800 dollars.

El Guerrouj an Aouita idolater



Moroccan Hicham El Guerrouj (L) and American Maurice Greene gesture during a press conference in Seville ahead of the World Championships on August 19. — AFP photo

## El Guerrouj an Aouita idolater

SEVILLE, Aug 20: (Reuters) Hicham El Guerrouj likes to joke his mother made him a runner.

Apparently, fed up with constantly washing his dirty soccer kit, his mother urged El Guerrouj to take up athletics.

The real influence on his life, though, was the great Moroccan runner Said Aouita.

El Guerrouj, who holds the world records for 1,500 metres and the mile, said at the age of nine he dreamed of representing his country at soccer, maybe even at the World Cup finals.

The 13 minutes 05.59 seconds Aouita took to win the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics 5,000 metres changed his life forever.

"I decided then that I wanted to be like Said," El Guerrouj said.

As a teenager he continued his dual career as a runner and goalkeeper for the local youth team until he came to the attention of Moroccan national coach Aziz Daouda, the man who had guided Aouita's career.

Daouda persuaded El Guerrouj to abandon his home town of Berkane for the Moroccan high altitude training centre at Ifrane, in the Atlas Mountains.

Success was not immediate but by the 1996 Olympics El Guerrouj had matured into one of the favourites for a gold medal.

Sadly, in the steamy heat of Atlanta, his heels were clipped and he stumbled over the inner curb in the 1,500 final, allowing Algeria's Noureddine Morceli to grab the gold.

El Guerrouj was left sobbing at his misfortune after the race but a year later he shed tears of joy as he became only the second Moroccan man, after his mentor Aouita, to win a World Championship title.

Last year he was unbeaten and he improved Morceli's 1,500 world record to 3:26.00.

In June, El Guerrouj deprived Morceli of his world mile record at the Rome Golden League meeting, clocking 3:43.12.

Now to extend his run of success, El Guerrouj first came to the attention of athletics pundits when he finished third in the 1992 world junior 5,000 metres.

At first he did not quite keep up with the prodigious progress of the two men in front of him, Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie.

Although he is coached by Abdellah Kada, a former Moroccan, El Guerrouj first came to the attention of the local youth team until he came to the attention of Moroccan national coach Aziz Daouda, the man who had guided Aouita's career.

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