

C'ships lack spectators

SEVILLE, Spain, Aug 24 (AP): What would happen if they held a World Championships and nobody came?

It's not that bad but, like two years ago in Athens, Greece, height southern Europeans interested in athletics at the height of the traditional August vacation season is proving impossible.

In the first three days, Seville's new Olympic Stadium has been half empty, even for the showcase 100-metre final Sunday night.

Like in Athens, attendance is expected to pick up in the last six days — and particularly next weekend on the final two days.

But the empty seats are proving an embarrassment for a sport struggling with image problems and drug scandals.

"To be honest, Spain in August is not an ideal time to hold a meet," said Vicente Ano, the Spaniard who heads the local organizing committee.

"Southern Europe doesn't have the fan base like northern Europe. I'm a little disappointed, but I can't say it's all that bad for a place where there is no strong tradition in the sport."

Accurate attendance figures are difficult to come by.

For instance, attendance Monday was listed at 37,815. But Ano admitted the actual number of fans who entered with a ticket was about 25,000. The remaining approx that's for soccer. For athletics it has been reduced to 48,000, of which 42,000 seats are actually on sale in this city of 700,000. Tickets prices certainly aren't the problem.

"We tried to get both teams to play the first two weekends at visa newspaper. Another headline in El Mundo — 'A deserted city' — pointed out that Seville was dead."

Court against multiple ownership

NYON, Switzerland, Aug 24: UEFA's ruling that clubs with common ownership may not participate in the same European competition was Monday backed by the Court of Arbitration for Sport here, reports AFP.

UEFA, football's European governing body, ruled in May last year that it would not allow two or more clubs under the same ownership to contest the same competition.

AEK Athens of Greece and Slavia Prague of the Czech Republic, two teams owned by the British-based company ENIC, had challenged the ruling in the arbitration court.

"UEFA said the court's decision meant the ruling would come into force for the 2000-2001 season."

"We are very satisfied with this decision," said UEFA president Lennart Johansson. "The CAS ruling is logical and based on common sense. It will help to preserve the sporting integrity of our club competitions and it is also in accordance with the EU-stance on this matter."

The CAS said in its ruling against the clubs' appeal that: "The public might perceive such a situation as presenting a conflict of interest potentially affecting the authenticity of sporting results."

"The effect of the contested rules is to discourage mergers and acquisitions between European professional football clubs, and thus to preserve the number of independent undertakings on the European football markets ... preserve and even enhance economic competition between club owners."

Rapid complain against refereeing

BUCHAREST, Aug 24: Champions Rapid Bucharest submitted a protest yesterday against bad refereeing, becoming the third local club to take up the matter with the Romanian Soccer Federation (FRF), reports Reuters.

In a letter to the FRF, Rapid accused the referee of last weekend's match against Otetul Galati of taking "deliberately wrong decisions" which Rapid said had led to their 2-0 defeat. "It was for the second time in four matches that Rapid unfairly lost points because of referees' mistakes," Rapid president George Dinu told Reuters. With only eight points from five games, Rapid fell to the middle of the standings.

Botham slams

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South African tour but reaffirmed his pride in the side that lost so convincingly at The Oval.

"The time has come with a new coach and a new season to make changes. We need a backbone of a side and more players like Michael Atherton to show us exactly how to go about being a Test player."

He urged a shake-up of the English county cricket system if they want to play on a par with other Test playing nations.

Speaking on BBC's Inside last night, he said: "We have the cricketers but we need a system of selection and unity to get the best out of them."

"Our system at County level is not the best but at Under-19s we are the best in the world."

"Unfortunately some players get lost in the mediocrity of County cricket. An example would be Andrew Flintoff, the more he plays in county cricket, the more he gets dragged down."

Growing in confidence



SEVILLE, Aug 24 (AP): Only jealous of the attention received by Marion Jones and Michael Johnson for being multiple-event athletes made Maurice Greene become a serious contender for a sprint double in the World Championships.

Now, the two-time world champion at 100 metres is trying to accomplish something not done by a male sprinter since Carl Lewis won the 100 and 200 in the 1984 Olympics by sweep the dashes in a major championship.

"To be a complete sprinter is every sprinter's goal," Greene said before beginning his bid for the 200 title Tuesday. "You can't just run the 100, you have to run both."

Just like Jones does and Lewis did, and if not the two short sprints, then the two long sprints, like Johnson does.

Greene's financial adviser, Emmanuel Hudson, said he and coach John Smith had to talk the 100 world record-holder into running the 200 this year in the USA Championships, the qualifying meet for the World Championships.

Greene had set the 100 record

of 9.79 seconds in Athens, Greece, 10 days before the national championships and wasn't interested in running the 200. That would have meant he wouldn't have competed in the nationals because he automatically was qualified for the Worlds as the defending champion.

"I'm not doing this," Greene said. However, when told that Johnson would be running the 200 instead of the 400, Greene's interest was piqued.

"We told him the way the public perceives you doesn't count unless you cross categories — like Johnson," Hudson said. "We told him he was the world champion in the 100. We said you're dominating in the 100. Now, you've got to get the 200."

"Michael's been the man in the 400 for 10 years. When he did both (winning the 200 and 400 at the 1996 Olympics), boom!"

"Now, they're talking about Marion Jones and how she's going for four gold medals (in the 100, 200, long jump and relay at the World Championships)."

As it turned out, Johnson, the world record-holder, withdrew from the 200 because of an

injury, and Greene won the title, giving him the opportunity for the rare sprint double.

His chances have improved immensely with the absences of Johnson, training partner Ato Boldon of Trinidad and Tobago, the 1997 world champion who is injured, and possibly Frankie Fredericks of Namibia, the leader in legal sub-20.00 second clockings with 24, four ahead of Johnson.

Fredericks, also the career leader in legal sub-10.00 times with 26, one more than Greene, withdrew from the semifinals of the 100 with a thigh injury and his status for the 200 was uncertain.

"In the 200, he (Greene) is getting more convinced," Hudson said.

The imperturbable Greene looks at the 200 as another challenge, something he thrives on.

"He's a real competitor — with everything," Hudson said, adding that his group, including Greene, Boldon, Jon Drummond, Larry Wade and Inger Miller, all have a need to get the competitive edge. "It can be swimming across a pool, video games, dominoes, cards..."

"If there's a challenge, they're competitive. There's no fun for him (Greene) unless he can be challenged."

The male sprinters — Greene, Boldon and Drummond — also challenge each other on things like who has the fastest 100-200 double for a career, for the year, for a meet and on the same day.

Greene's competitiveness will work in his favour in the 200. He won't let the emotional high of winning his second straight world title Sunday night in 9.80, only 0.01 seconds off his world record, affect his bid for his first major international championship in the 200.

"It doesn't take a lot to get him motivated," Hudson said. "On the day of a meet, you don't have to say anything to him. Just tell Maurice there's a race and he goes."

Smith is not taking any chances. "When you win a race like this (the 100), there's the chance you can have an emotional let-down," he said. "We have to make sure he's ready to run the first and second rounds."

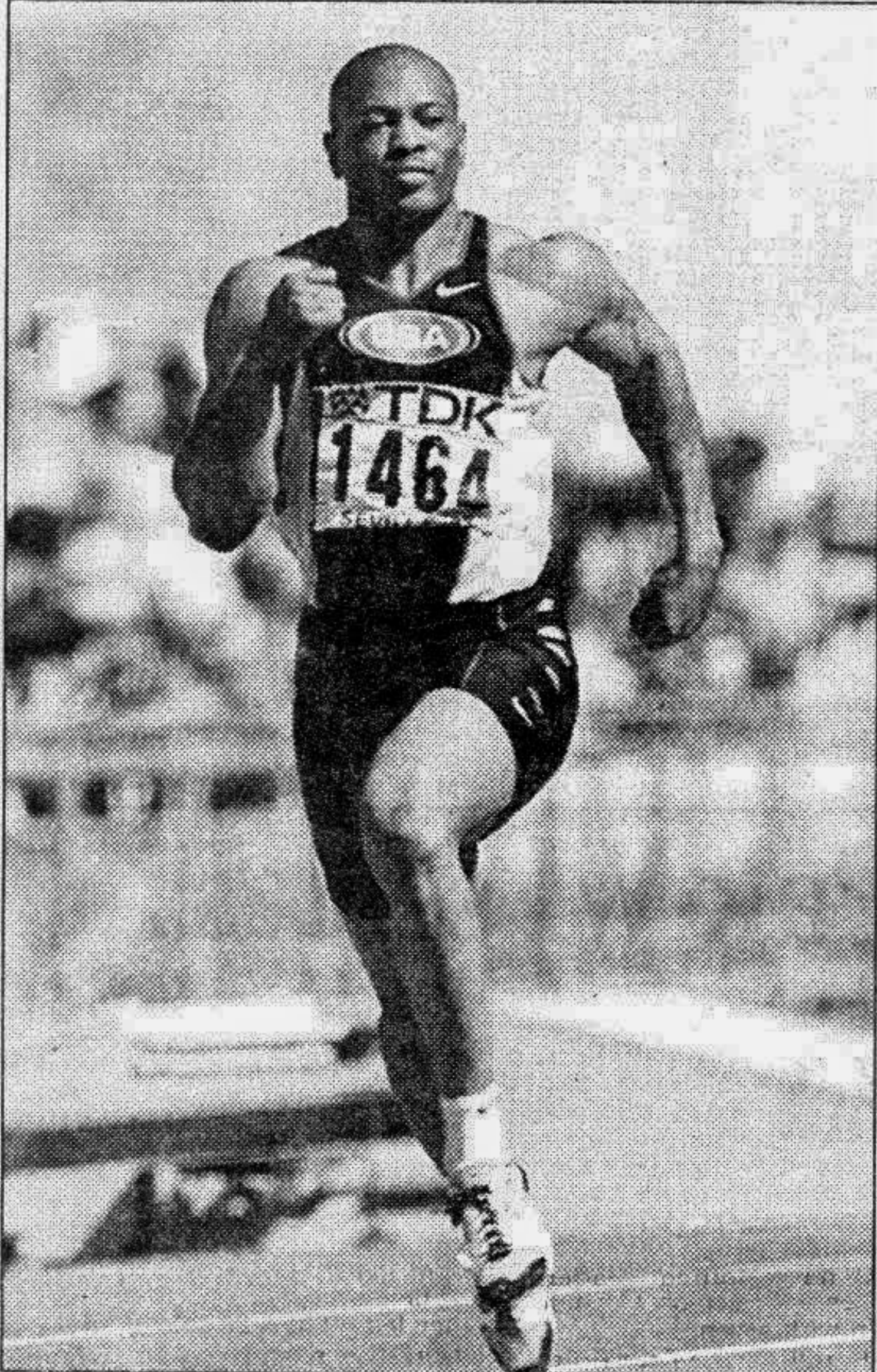
Greene, enjoying the best year ever by a male 100-metre runner, with the world record and nine legal sub-10.00 clockings, probably would have broken the 100 record again if he hadn't stumbled out of the blocks.

"I had a goal of 9.76," he said. "The start wasn't as good as I wanted. The little problem I had at the beginning was the world record."

"I haven't run the perfect race. If I do, then we'll see what happens."

Greene is not putting limits on his potential.

"I'm not going to say I'm only going to run one (particular) time, because if I run it, they'll think that's as fast as I can run," he said.



American Maurice Greene in action during the 200m heats yesterday. —AFP photo

Another Thorpe record



SYDNEY, Aug 24: Australian swimming wonder Ian Thorpe captured his third world record in as many days and was joined by American backstroke Lenny Krayzelburg on another trail-blazing night at the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships here Tuesday, reports AFP.

Thorpe bettered his own world record set the previous night in claiming the 200 metres freestyle final — his third gold medal of an overpowering meet.

Thorpe's exploits shaded, but only just, Krayzelburg's world record in the 100m backstroke, the sixth world mark to topple in three days of competition at the super-fast Sydney Olympic pool.

The 16-year-old Thorpe shattered his own world record of 1:46.34 seconds set in the semi-final with a winning time of 1:46.00.

On Sunday Thorpe hacked into Kieren Perkins' 400m freestyle world record which had stood since 1994.

"It's pretty unbelievable being able to do that and trying to do my best for my team," said Thorpe.

"I didn't expect to do everything I've done here in this meet and it's pretty exciting."

The 23-year-old Ukrainian-born Krayzelburg, who confi-

dently predicted a world record here, swam 53.60 seconds to better compatriot Jeff Rouse's record of 53.86sec set at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Krayzelburg swam within 14-100ths of a second of the record at this year's US Nationals in Minneapolis on August 9.

He glided through the first 50m in under world record pace in 25.97 seconds and held a commanding full body length from Australians Matt Welsh (55.13) and Josh Watson (55.18) as he powered into the wall.

"I'm really excited about this world record, but my goal is the Olympic gold medal," said Krayzelburg. "I feel until I do that I won't be fully satisfied... I'd like to think that this time makes a statement."

Krayzelburg joined in the adulation of home-town hero Thorpe.

"Ian is swimming absolutely unbelievable and when you see great swimmers do awesome times you always want to bring out the best in yourself and that's what I wanted to do tonight."

The runner-up to Thorpe, world champion Michael Klim in 1:47.40, was left shaking his head at the performance of his amazing teammate.

"I don't think anyone can stop him at the moment," said Klim.

"He was way too good on the

day and I didn't have a very good race either. I wasn't able to challenge him at the turns."

It has been an extraordinary few days for Thorpe, who said he was hurting in the last 50m of Tuesday's final.

It was Thorpe's third gold medal of the meet after sharing in Australia's 100m medley relay win on Sunday night.

He will swim in the 100m freestyle and 200m freestyle relay in his quest for more gold at the Pan Paces.

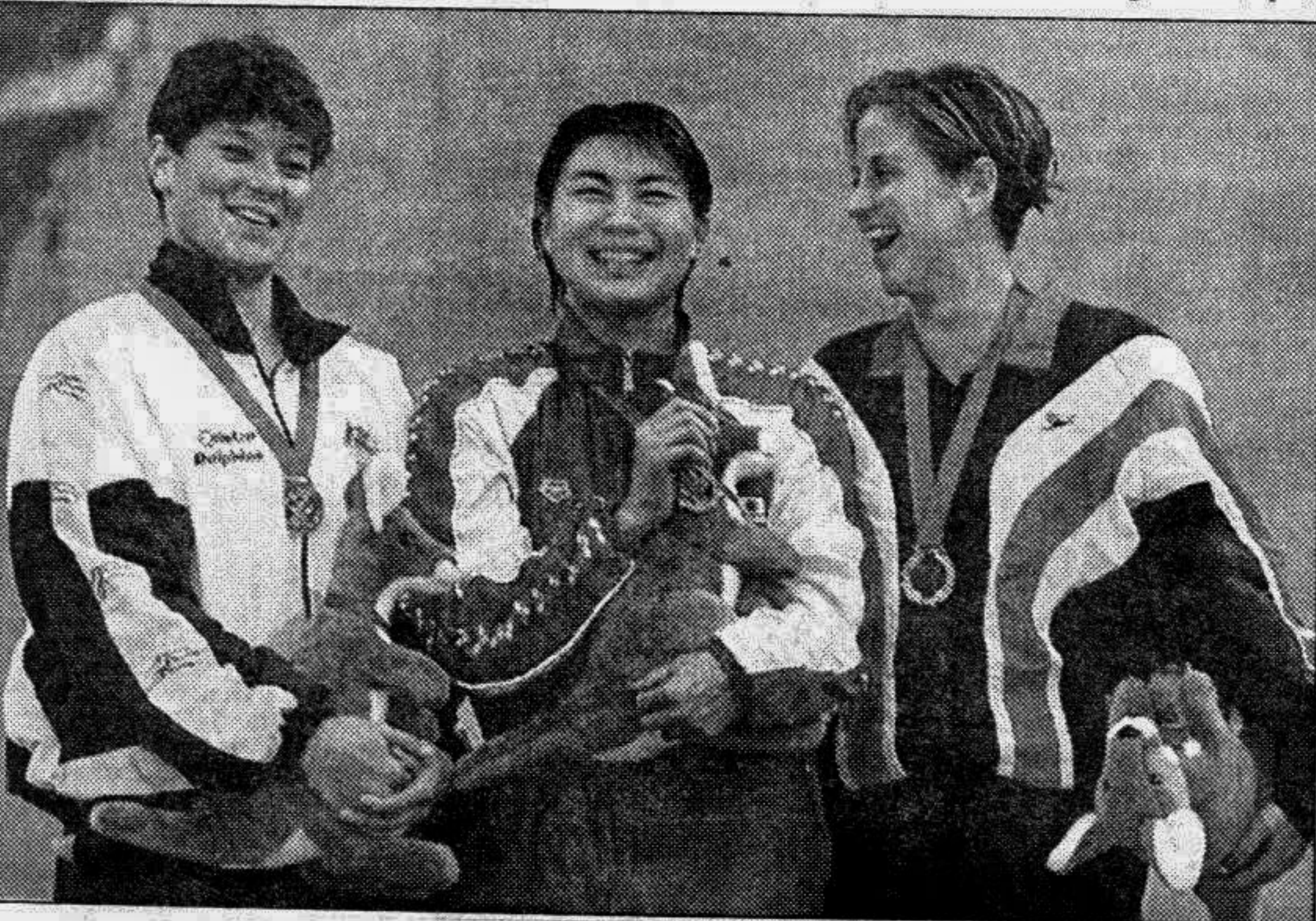
But the workload appears to be catching up on the strongly-built Thorpe.

"I feel incredibly lethargic... during the race I just hoped my legs would have enough to allow me to hang on," said Thorpe.

Wednesday's will be a hectic day for him. There are heats of the 100m freestyle and will also swim in the 200m freestyle team, which has strong hopes of breaking their world record.

MEDALS TABLE

Medal table after the third night of competition at the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships here Tuesday (under gold, silver, bronze, total):			
Australia	6	61	13
USA	4	34	11
Canada	1	13	5
Japan	1	11	3
S Africa	1	0	23
Costa Rica	0	0	11
(deadheat for gold Aus/Jpn)			



Pan Pacific Swimming Championships backstroke gold medalist Australia's Dyana Calub(C) with silver medalist Mai Nakamura of Japan and bronze winner American Barbara Bedford on the victory podium yesterday. —AFP photo

Moya stoops to Meligeni

COMMACK, New York, Aug 24 (Reuters/AFP): Carlos Moya will have to do his final preparation for next week's US Open on the practice courts after the third-seeded Spaniard was bounced from the Hamlet Cup in the first round today.

Brazilian Fernando Meligeni scored his first win over the 1997 Hamlet champion in four career meetings as he battled back for a 6-7, 7-6, 6-3 victory.

"Maybe I was confident too much," said the eighth-ranked Moya, who briefly held the world's top ranking earlier this year. "We both had chances in the second set and he took all of them. Sometimes it's just your turn to win. It was his turn."

The win was Meligeni's first over a top-10 player on a hard court. All his previous success against the game's elite has come on clay.

"I'm practicing a lot. I want to be more competitive on hard courts," the Brazilian said.

Fifth-seeded Dutchman Richard Krajicek swept past American Jan-Michael Gambill 6-4, 6-3 in the final night match.

The big-serving former Wimbledon champion is looking to regain his confidence on the hardcourts where he enjoyed success earlier this year with his title at the Lipton Championships in March.

The only other seed seen opening day action was seventh-seeded Swede Thomas Enqvist. The Australian Open runner-up dominated the third set to escape with a 4-6, 7-6, 6-1 victory over compatriot Magnus Larsson.

Australian Open champion and two-time Hamlet winner Yevgeny Kafelnikov is the tournament's top seed.

The third-ranked Russian, runner-up to Andre Agassi Sunday in Washington, is looking to build on his impressive 1999 21-6 hardcourt record in his final tune-up for the US Open, where he will be among the top contenders.

Two-time defending US Open champion Patrick Rafter of Australia was unable to defend his title here as he rests his sore shoulder.

Rafter's countryman Mark Philippoussis, who was to be the fourth seed, also pulled out of the tournament with a knee injury.

Philippoussis, who damaged cartilage in the knee in a quarterfinal clash with Pete Sampras at Wimbledon and had surgery in early July, said his participation in the US Open, the final Grand Slam tournament of the year was in doubt.

"Right now, we are not even worried about that," said his coach, former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash. "We have to strengthen that knee and get it the way it was before."

Philippoussis returned to action after a six-week absence at Indianapolis last week, making a second-round exit at the hands of France's Arnaud Di Pasquale.

"It's very disappointing," Philippoussis said.

"At this point, I have to say that his chances are moderate. It's 50/50," tournament doctor David Dines said of the Aussie's prospects of playing in the US Open, which starts a week from Monday in New York. A decision was to be made on Saturday.

Courier crashes

BROOKLINE, Massachusetts, Aug 24: Seventh-seeded Jim Courier lost to 60th-ranked Sargis Sargsian 6-4, 6-4, in the first round of the US Pro-Tennis Championships on Monday at Longwood Cricket Club, reports Reuters.

Courier was hoping to make amends after losing last month in the Davis Cup quarterfinals on these same courts.

Courier and Sargsian, who both live in Orlando, Florida, have been frequent practice partners.

"I practice with him so much, I feel more confident, playing him in a match," Sargsian said. "And I'm a mature player right now, I'm hitting solid from the baseline. My biggest weapon tonight was my backhand down the line."

Actually, Sargsian's serve had a lot to do with his success against the 36th-ranked Courier. He lost only 14 points on serve in the match and served the last three games at love.

In the first set, after squandering six set points, Sargsian finally ended the set with a service ace.

Sargsian broke at love for a 4-3 lead in the second set.

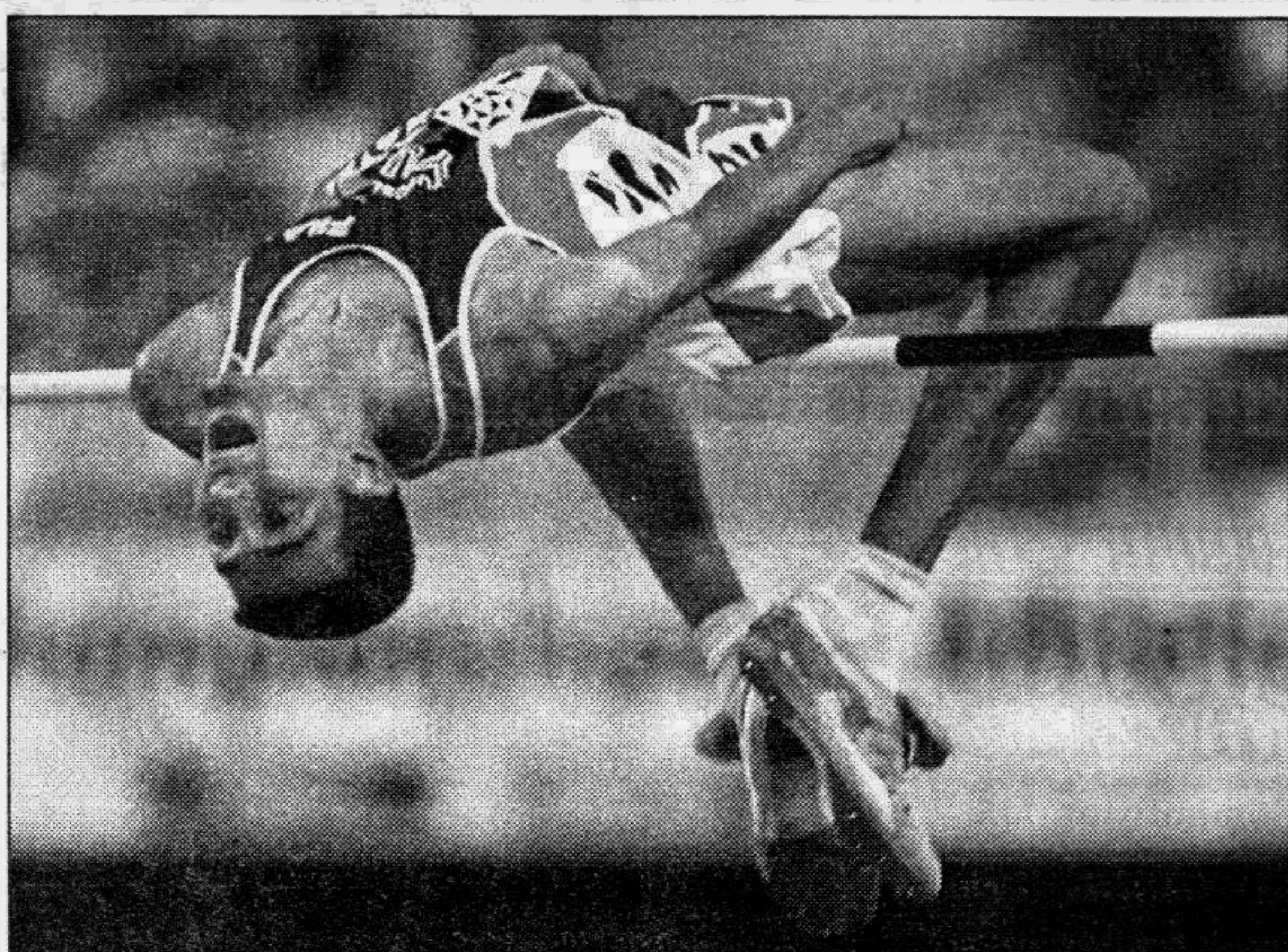
"This was not what I was looking for tonight," Courier said. "I just wasn't sharp and I was pressing because he wasn't missing. I'll just have to regroup and get ready for New York and the US Open."

Meanwhile, fourth-seeded Cedric Pioline and eighth-seeded Jonas Bjorkman were easy afternoon winners.

Pioline, No 1 in France and a two-time Grand Slam finalist, used a strong service and steady ground strokes to put away Argentine Gaston, 6-4, 6-0.

Sweden's Bjorkman beat Slovakia's Jan Krosiak 6-2, 7-6. "I moved him around a little better on the second set and he made a lot of unforced errors," said Pioline, a one-time runner-up at Wimbledon and the US Open.

Also advancing to the second round was sixth-seeded Marat Safin of Russia, a 7-5, 7-5 winner over Italy's Gianluca Pozzi. Other first-round winners were France's Arnaud Clement, who outlasted Slava Dosedel of the Czech Republic 3-6, 7-6, 6-2; Australia's Andrew Elie, who was leading Romanian Andrei Pavel, 6-3, 1-0, when Pavel retired with an elbow injury; and Cecil Mamiit edged Costa Rican Juan Antonio Marin, 7-6, 6-4.



Russian Vyacheslav Voronin clears the bar during the men's high jump final in Seville on August 23. —AFP photo

Trouble in Seville



SEVILLE, Aug 24: Athletics found itself locked in a series of quasi-legal battles at the World Championships here on Monday night as the sport became enveloped in controversy, reports AFP.

Italian long jumper Fiona May announced she was quitting the sport immediately after losing the long jump title to Spain's Nurka Montalvo.

May claimed that Montalvo's final and winning leap was a false jump and the Italian team promptly lodged a protest.

"I don't want to be unsporting but I saw the jump and it was a foul," said the Briton-turned-Italian.

"I can't go on like this," said a tearful May. "I'll never forget the moment. It is very, very difficult for me."

The Americans leapt into the legal fray by lodging a protest when 1.10m hurdler Mark Crear was disqualified in the quarterfinals for two false starts.

"It is a scandalous decision," snapped Crear. "I didn't think I false started on the first one. I never prepared myself for this. This was the second round and it was not like I was trying to run 12.70 or something. Somehow I am going to have to pick up the broken pieces and salvage the best of the season."

There was no protest, only inner anger, from American

sprint queen Marion Jones who failed to become the first woman to win four gold medals in a single championship when she could only manage bronze in the long jump.

"Just bronze does not cut it for me. By the standards I set myself I have under achieved. I came here for four golds," said Jones, who on Sunday won the 100m title in the fastest women's 100m race in history. The top six went under 11 seconds.

"I will now have to go back to the drawing board," she added.

Jones, however, can still pick up two more titles by taking the 200m and the relay.

But some events managed to go off without a threat of legal action.

Christopher Koskei, who almost died from multiple stab wounds in March last year, won the 3,000m steeplechase title.

Koskei, who won silver in Gothenburg four years ago running with no shoes, beat defending champion Wilson Boit Kipketer, Morocco's Ali Ezzine (8:12.73) was third.

World recordholder Bernard Barmasai, who is involved in a racefixing allegation over the race at the Golden League meeting in Zurich where he admitted Koskei had allowed him to win, faded to finish outside the medals after leading going into the final lap.

Vyacheslav Voronin shook off his bridesmaid title when he

won a world championship gold by producing a faultless display of high jumping.

The Russian cleared the bar on his first attempt at every height right the way through to 2.37 metres, the best performance this year.

The silver medal went to Mark Boswell, who set a Canadian record with a clutch jump on his third attempt at 2.35m. Germany's Martin Buss, with 2.32, won the bronze medal thanks to a better clearance record at lower heights than the Yugoslav, Dragutin Topić.

Until Monday, Voronin had looked to be a perpetual silver medalist, following second places at the 1993 European juniors, last year's European indoor Championships, and at the World Indoors in Maebashi earlier this year.

"I am glad I went to Japan now, because after that result, I realised that I could be one of the world's best," Voronin said. Germany's giant discus thrower Franka Dietzsch won her first discus world championship gold medal with a throw of 68.14m.

Dietzsch, who stands 1.83m, finished ahead of Greece's Anastasia Kelesidou (66.05m) and Romania's Nicoleta Grasu (65.35).

Defending champion Beatrice Faumuina of New Zealand could only manage fifth place with 64.62m.

Spaniard shatters Jones' dream



to compete in the two events at next year's Sydney Olympics.

Montalvo's final jump looked perilously close to a no-fly and the Italians protested to the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF). A jury of appeal rejected the protest.

"I saw it was a foul," said a tearful May. "I don't want to sound unsportsmanlike but everybody saw it."

Jones, who had a jump which seemed good enough for victory red-flagged, said she was not sure whether Montalvo's final jump was valid. "It was mighty close," she said.

Asked if she was disappointed, the American replied: "I'm going to sleep well tonight."

The only track gold of the night came in the steeplechase where a Kenyan was the predictable winner.

This time it was the former world junior champion Christopher Koskei who finished first, pulling ahead of the defending champion Wilson Boit Kipketer over the final metres to win in eight minutes 11.76 seconds.

Koskei is currently being investigated by the IAAF after his compatriot and world record holder Bernard Barmasai claimed he had agreed to slow down in the finishing straight

in the Zurich golden League meeting.

Barmasai's victory kept him in contention for the million dollar Golden League jackpot shared between athletes who win each of their events.

Koskei has denied colluding with Barmasai and gave a glimpse into Kenyan tactics on Monday when he said they had run as a team until the last 200 when it had become every man for himself.

"I am known for my fast finish," he said. "I wasn't concerned that I was second with a lap to go."

The opening gold of the evening went to Germany's European champion Franka Dietzsch in the women's discus.

Dietzsch underlined Germany's strengths in the throwing events after Karsten Kobs' gold in the men's hammer with Lars Riedel set for a fifth consecutive title in the men's discus today.

Russian Vyacheslav Voronin ended a disappointing sequence of second places with victory in the men's high jump.

"I'm praying between rounds," he said.

Olympic high hurdles silver medalist Mark Crear, disqualified after two false starts in the second round will hear the result of his appeal today.

Savon pulls through

HOUSTON, Aug 24: Cuba's two-time Olympic heavyweight champion Felix Savon rallied to hold off Andrei Kombaron of Russia 7-5 on Monday to advance to the quarterfinals of the World Amateur Boxing Championships, reports Reuters.