

FA Cup Palace sent crashing

LONDON, Dec 11: Second Division strugglers Cambridge United sent First Division Crystal Palace crashing out of the FA Cup with a 2-1 third-round win at the Abbey Stadium on Friday night, reports AFP.

Cambridge secured their place in the fourth round with two goals in seven frantic second-half minutes as lacklustre Palace were out-fought and out-played by their lower division opponents.

Trevor Benjamin opened the scoring in the 74th minute and Paul Wanless scored with a header seven minutes later.

Palace's night of misery was completed when defender Hayden Mullins was sent off for a second yellow card five minutes from time.

In the only other match played Friday night, Nottingham Forest were held to a 1-1 at home by Second Division Oxford United, increasing the pressure on under-fire Forest manager David Platt.

Forest, who have lost six of their last seven First Division games, took the lead after 39 minutes through striker Dougie Freedman but failed to hold onto their advantage.

A 76th-minute equaliser from substitute Paul Powell sealed Oxford a replay at their Manor Ground.

Oxford looked as if they had come to force a replay and I honestly couldn't see them scoring," said former England international Platt. "But in the end we paid the penalty for not being able to kill them off."

Werder waste opportunity

BERLIN, Dec 11: Werder Bremen squandered a golden opportunity to close in on a German league leaders Bayern Munich when they were held to a 2-2 home draw by promoted SpVgg Unterhaching on Friday night, reports AFP.

Werder appeared to be cruising to victory when they led 2-0 through goals from Yuri Maximov with a header and Brazilian Altton, but Unterhaching hit back to grab a draw with goals in the last 15 minutes from Oliver Straube and Andre Breitenreiter.

Bayern still lead the table with 27 points while Werder moved up into fifth place on 23 points.

In the only other match on Friday night, a 75th-minute penalty from Croatian Marjan Kovacevic gave MSV Duisburg a 1-0 win away to struggling Arminia Bielefeld.

The win lifted the Zebras two spots higher to 15th and out of the relegation zone.

I am not sure if it really was a penalty and I can understand the fans being unhappy because we are more than unhappy, too," Bielefeld captain Bruno Labbadia said.

There's no sense of resignation in the team. We controlled the game from early on. The Duisburg players even said themselves they could have been two or three goals down at half-time. After that, it's tough to lose the game."

WC 2002

Bid to make ticketing safer

TOKYO, Dec 11: People buying tickets for the 2002 World Cup from an official outlet will have their details entered into a database in an effort to reduce the number of tickets hitting the black market, a top FIFA official said, reports Reuters.

"We will... have the name and address of every person who bought four tickets on a database. While this does not remove the black market, it very much restricts it," said David Willis, FIFA vice-president and head of the 2002 World Cup ticketing sub-committee.

"... we hope to control it as best we can by restricting sales of tickets at the end point, where they are finally sold, to four tickets per person," Willis said earlier this week during his visit to Tokyo for the 2002 World Cup preliminary draw.

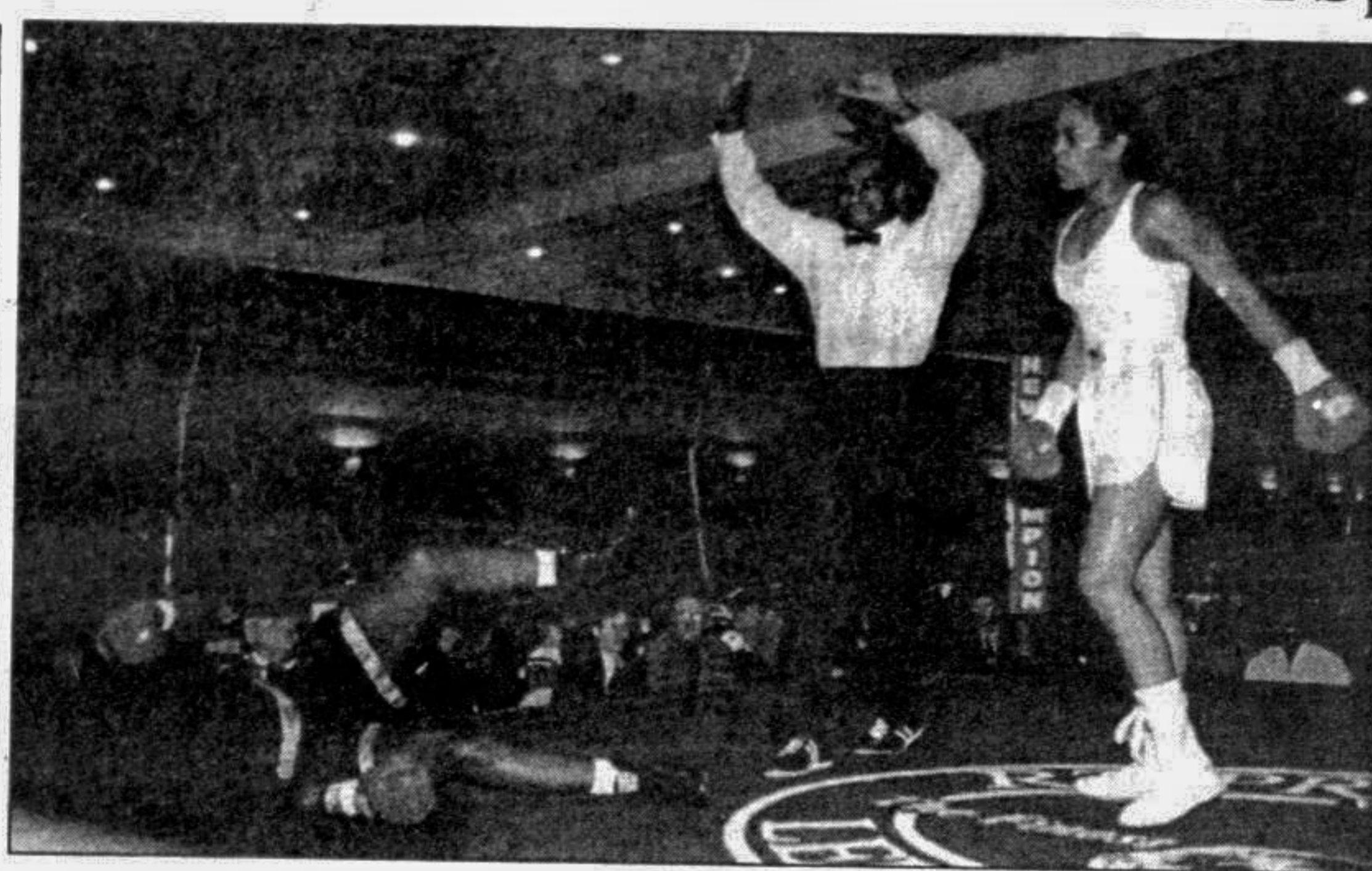
Willis said FIFA hoped to have its ticketing strategy in place by March, and to start selling tickets by September or October next year.

He also described as "completely in a state of flux" the situation regarding the number of tickets to be allocated to the Japanese and South Korean football associations.

Out of a total of around three million tickets available, the two host associations are due to be given 750,000 each. Japan has complained that it should receive a higher allocation of at least one million.

"No numbers or percentages have been decided," said Willis. "How can we do that when we don't even know the capacity of the 20 stadiums because most of them are under construction?"

The 1998 World Cup in France produced a huge black market for tickets after 65 per cent were sold in the host country. After other tickets were set aside for sponsors, the media and for FIFA, this left the two national associations involved in any one game with only eight per cent of seats to offer their own fans.



Laila Ali watches Nicolyn Armstrong lying on the mat as the referee stops their fight in the second round at the Cobo Hall in Detroit on December 10. —AFP photo

Laila too hot to handle

DETROIT, Dec 11 (AP): She says she was never athletic. She never saw her famous father fight. Still, Laila Ali has her sights set on a title fight of her own.

Alli took another major step in that direction Friday night with a second-round knockout of Nicolyn Armstrong for her third straight win to chants of "Alli, Alli."

"That was a nice feeling," said Alli, whose boxing career started in October, after she lost nine kilos (20 pounds). "But, I don't pay much attention to that, because in the ring, it's just me and that girl."

The 1.77 metre (5-foot-10) Ali, weighing in at 75.8 kilos (166 pounds), less than her taller opponent, knocked Armstrong (1-4) down late in the first round with a left jab, followed by three hard rights.

In the second round, Ali battered Armstrong in the corner, then knocked her flat on her back — as she had done her two previous opponents — with a left-right combination that brought a roar from the crowd of about 2,200 fans in the Riverview Ballroom of Cobo Center.

Armstrong, 31, who had to lose several pounds in the hours immediately before the bout to get down to 81 kilos (179 pounds), Armstrong, who received 2,500 dollars for her effort, won her pro debut in December 1997 by a second-round

technical knockout. But she had been knocked out three straight times — all in the first round — leading to this bout.

Alli's first two opponents were equally untested. Fowler, 27, had fought just once as a pro, also being knocked out in the first round, Pennypacker, 28, was making her pro debut against Alli.

But that's by design. "I'll fight anybody, if they're on my experience level," Alli said. "There are certain people I'm not going to fight yet, because they have so much more experience, and my people don't want me in the ring with them yet."

But I'm definitely not going to end up dodging people or not fighting peoples. That's just not me." All travels with her mother, Veronica Kennedy, the third of Muhammad Ali's four wives. She was 7 when her parents divorced.

Laila was too young to see her father fight in person, but she has watched tapes of his bouts. She says her favourite is Ali's famed "rope-a-dope" knockout of George Foreman in Zaire in 1974.

television funds to the IOC unless significant reforms are enacted.

Much of Friday's news conference centered on the case of powerful IOC executive board member Kim Un-yong of South Korea, the highest-ranking IOC delegate implicated in the Salt Lake affair.

Kim received a "severe warning" from the IOC earlier this year. In May, the ethics commission gave his case and that of Australia's Phil Coles to the executive board without reviewing them. It said the board already had the cases under control.

Kim's son, John Kim, was indicted in September as part of the Justice Department's investigation of the Salt Lake case. He was charged with lying to investigators and entering the United States with a fraudulently obtained green card.

Asked earlier this week whether the elder Kim's case was being reviewed in light of his son's indictment, IOC director general Francois Carrard said, "There are no new facts as far as we are concerned. It would be a matter for the ethics commission."

But Commission members said Friday they have no power to initiate further investigations on the case, which Servan-Schreiber said is "closed until there is now proof."

"If there is something new, the executive board (that originally considered the case) will consider it," he said. "Whether they deal with it or whether they decide to send it to the ethics commission, that will be their call."

Servan-Schreiber said the commission "cannot be an investigative body." "They are volunteers...It will be a judging body," he said.

But he insisted a full-time ethics commissioner to be appointed next year will be "very effective" in dealing with allegations of corruption.

Graf loses

STELLENBOSCH, South Africa, Dec 11 (AP): Steffi Graf may have lost her competitive edge since she retired from professional tennis in August, but her popularity hasn't waned a bit.

Graf lost to South Africa's top player Amanda Coetzer 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 in the second match of their three-match exhibition series Friday after having convincingly won the first leg of the tour.

Coetzer came back from a set down to win, but her home crowd still cheered louder for her opponent, something South African sports fans virtually never do.

Graf started strongly, but Coetzer gained the upper hand in the second set, hitting powerful down-the-line backhands, which left the German standing.

Coetzer started the final set breaking Graf's serve. Graf immediately broke back, but Coetzer broke Graf's serve again in the fourth and seventh games, then held her own serve to love and ended the match with an ace.

Graf, 30, is in South Africa on the first leg of a yearlong world tour to show her appreciation to the fans who have supported her since she took to the professional circuit at age 13.

She said she has hardly played any tennis since she retired and is enjoying her occasional court appearances.

"I'm not taking everything so seriously. The most important thing is that people enjoy it," she told reporters after the match.

Asked if she planned a comeback she replied: "Oh no." Franco Barocas, the promoter of the series, said that turnout for Graf in Durban was the largest crowd at a tennis match in the Indian Ocean city had seen in 40 years.

The 500-seat Stellenbosch stadium — the only one available — was sold out within two days.

Graf and Coetzer, currently ranked 11th in the world, met again in Johannesburg on Sunday for the series' deciding match.

Special formula for Rafter

SYDNEY, Dec 11: Tennis Australia said Saturday they were holding a wild card for Pat Rafter for the Australian Open in January after the former two-time US Open champion missed the deadline for the official entry, reports AFP.

Rafter has only just started hitting again after the shoulder operation which forced him to miss the Davis Cup final against France last week.

"He's still very anxious to play, but he does not want to take any risks that could wreck the rest of his season," Tennis Australia spokesman Lysette Shaw said.

"If he does not make it for the singles he could always play doubles, as you enter doubles during the tournament," Shaw said.

Rafter wants to play at least one tournament prior to the Australian Open, which starts January 17, and has entered the Adelaide ATP event on January 3 and the Melbourne Cup on the week prior to the Open.

"He's hitting up with Tony Roche this week in Sydney," Shaw said. "And doing everything he can to get fit."

Roche is both coach to Rafter and the Australian Davis Cup team.

US player-of-year Armstrong, Serena top contenders

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado, Dec 11: Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong and US Open tennis champions Andre Agassi and Serena Williams were among the finalists for the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) for its 1999 sportsman-and-sportswoman-of-the-year awards, reports Reuters.

Armstrong, Agassi and sprinter Maurice Greene were the three finalists for the USOC sportsman-of-the-year. Joining Williams as sportswoman-of-the-year finalists were swimmer Jenny Thompson and women's soccer star Michelle Akers.

Armstrong, who had already defied incredible odds by beating cancer, he was not expected to survive, took the sporting world by storm with his inspirational Tour de France victory this summer. He became only the second American to win the world's most prestigious cycling event, and did it in such spectacular fashion that he helped erase memories of the doping scandals that plagued the 1998 Tour.

Agassi won the French and US Opens, reached the Wimbledon final and finished the finest year of his career as the number one ranked tennis player in the world. His French Open title made him one of just five men to have won all four Grand Slam titles in their careers.

Greene laid claim to the world's fastest man title in 1999 by breaking the 100 meters world record with a time of 9.97 seconds. He also captured three gold medals at the World Championships, winning the 100 and 200 meters as well as running on the victorious 4x100 relay team, and won 60 meters gold at the World Indoor Championships.

Williams enjoyed a sensational breakthrough year in which she won her first five career WTA Tour singles titles, including the US Open at the age of 17. Williams, who also won the US Open doubles crown with older sister Venus, had wins over every other top player in 1999 and finished the year ranked fourth in the world.

The winners will receive their awards on January 8, at the US Olympic Awards Dinner in Indianapolis.



Sweden's Therese Alshammar (R) being congratulated by a fellow countrywoman after winning the 100m freestyle with a world record at the European Championships in Lisbon on December 10. She clocked 52.8 seconds. —AFP photo

Swedes set pool afire

LISBON, Dec 11: Sweden's Therese Alshammar and Anna-Karin Kammerling broke world records with a pair of supreme swims and then linked up for a sprint relay win at the European short-course swimming championships on Friday, reports Reuters.

Alshammar eclipsed the 100 metres freestyle mark held for six years by Chinese Olympic champion Le Jingyi while Kammerling broke American Jenny Thompson's 50 metres butterfly standard which had stood for less than a month.

They then joined up with Johanna Sjoberg and Malin Svahnstrom to bring Sweden a world best time in the women's 4x50 metres freestyle relay.

Alshammar clocked 52.80 seconds in the blue riband 100 freestyle to wipe out the 53.01 record set by Le in winning the first world short-course title in Palma de Mallorca on December 2, 1993, before the Chinese powerhouse went on to world long-course and Olympic titles.

Alshammar went through the 50-metre mark in 25.30, inside Le's 25.49 Palma split, and surged on for the record.

Defending champion Sue Rolph of Britain took the silver in 53.26 and German Olympic silver medalist Sandra Voelker, Alshammar's training partner in Hamburg and the 1996 European short-course champion, claimed the bronze in 53.34.

"I'm very surprised, shocked in a good way — happy," said Alshammar, 50 freestyle silver medalist at the European long-course championships in Istanbul in July.

"I didn't expect anything, coming in here, but I swam very well in the semifinals — I felt easy and relaxed."

Swedish chief coach Hans Chrunak said: "It's great. I think it's one of the best performances ever in Swedish swimming."

Kammerling followed that with a pulsating victory in the 50 butterfly, sweeping home in 25.64 seconds to beat the record of 26.00 set by Thompson at a World Cup meeting in College Park, Maryland, on November 18. Sjoberg was second in 26.42.

"I expected to win but I didn't expect to swim that fast... The goal was to set a new world record, maybe 25.9 or something," Kammerling said.

The Swedes wrapped up a great day — which also included a gold medal for world short-course champion Lars Frolander in the men's 100 metres butterfly — by taking the seldom-swum 4x50 freestyle women's relay in one minute 38.45 seconds.

Silver medalists Germany clocked 1:39.21 and were also inside the 1:39.56 mark a German quartet set last December.

"Before the 100 freestyle I was very nervous and tense but afterwards I had nothing to lose and I just swam for the relay — just everything flew," said Alshammar, who swam the fastest split of 23.80 in the relay.

Frolander deposed James Hickman as 100 butterfly champion, seizing an early lead and repelling the Briton's challenge to reverse the order of last year's duel in Sheffield. Frolander won in 51.19, with Hickman second in 51.43.

But Britain's Mark Foster retained his 50 metres freestyle crown, beating the formidable Pieter van den Hoogenband. Foster, who only just qualified for the semifinals, won in 21.71, with Van den Hoogenband, who retained his 200 freestyle title on Thursday, second in 21.79.

"He's never beaten me and he never will. He's not an explosive sprinter," said Foster, 29. Lorenzo Vismara of Italy took the bronze in 21.83.

Foster and Vismara were nearly eliminated in the morning's heats, Foster making the cut by a mere 0.05 seconds and Vismara — 16th and last semifinalist — by just 0.03.

Germany's Anne Poleska pulled off a major coup by beating world long-course champion Agnes Kovacs with a superb late attack in the women's 200 metres breaststroke.

The Hungarian, triple gold medalist at the European long-course championships, settled for her second silver.

Ukraine's Jana Klochkova scooped her second gold, following Thursday's 400 individual medley win by deposing Switzerland's Flavia Rigamonti as 800 freestyle champion. Rigamonti was second, more than three seconds behind.

Italy's Massimo Rosolino followed Thursday's 200 freestyle silver with gold in the 400 freestyle. Russian-born Nina Zhivanevskaya won the 100 backstroke for her new country Spain and Iceland's Orn Arnarson retained his 200 backstroke title.

Boyd said that reports from three doctors who treated Johnson will be submitted to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport on Monday in the hope an arbitrator will strike down this latest positive doping result.

Casey Wade, the CCES director of drug-free sport, said, "The system is designed to protect athletes to be allowed to use a medication if they need one legitimately."

"If there's an explanation and it's medically justified like any other athlete, Ben will be treated fairly," Wade added.

Defending Johnson's decision to work in Libya which was under United Nations' sanctions until earlier this year, Chrobotek said: "They won't allow him to make a living, to feed his family... What is he to do?"

He added, "We're going there on a sports agenda, underlined." Within the next few months, Chrobotek said he plans to establish an international training camp in the Caribbean with his team of trainers including Johnson.

"We have a few people who are willing to invest millions of dollars into this," said Chrobotek, adding that he planned to try to interest the governments of Barbados, St. Lucia, Martinique and St. Martin in Johnson's new venture.

Johnson strikes Libyan deal

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, Dec 11: Banned Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson has hired himself out to train members of the Libyan national soccer team, including the son of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, Johnson's agent said Friday, reports Reuters.

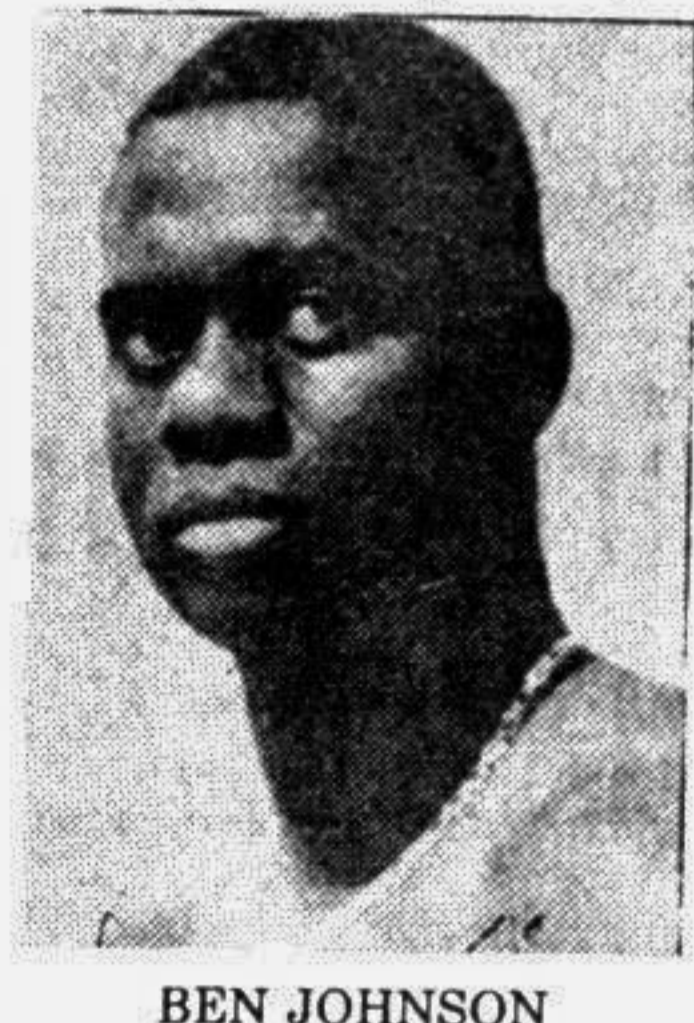
The deal to provide strength and power training to Al-Saad Gaddafi and his teammates in the next three months, is worth about \$35,000 (US) to the cash-strapped Johnson, his agent Morris Chrobotek said from Toronto in a telephone interview.

Chrobotek said he believes the Libyan deal will lead to a new career for Johnson as a trainer.

"It's going to be state-of-the-art training as we did for Diego Maradona," said Chrobotek, referring to Johnson's work with the Argentine soccer player in his 1997 comeback.

The group going to Libya, which is preparing for preliminary rounds of the African Cup and World Cup which start next year, include soccer coach Armando Costa and massage therapist Yusuf Omar. Soccer coach Lalo Maradona and a nutritionist will join Johnson in January.

Johnson was stripped of his 1988 Olympic gold medal after a 9.79 world record time when he tested positive for steroids in Seoul. He was banned for life after a 1993 test showed high testosterone levels.



BEN JOHNSON

Johnson's lawyer Gary Boyd said Friday that his client had been prescribed the medication to treat high blood pressure, a condition he had kept secret.

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IOC divided within?

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 11: Just as the International Olympic Committee set out to embrace reform, the organisation's commitment to change was called into question, reports AP.

As the IOC prepared to vote Saturday on reforms designed to repair its scandal-tainted image, it sent out mixed signals about whether it is truly determined to tackle corruption.

Members of the IOC ethics commission, set up in the wake of the Salt Lake City bribery scandal, said it wasn't their job to initiate new investigations or to open inquiries into past cases of alleged abuses.

The ethics panel chairman, Keba Mbaye of Senegal, angrily dismissed suggestions that the IOC had fostered a "culture of corruption."

"If there were just one honest man in an organisation, I think that would be sufficient not to cast a shadow on the entire organisation," he said. "Even if it's 20 per cent who were guilty, I find that there are still 80 per cent who are honest."

The ethics commission, composed of five outside members and three IOC delegates, had been billed as an independent panel which would clean up any corruption cases.

But the overall picture conveyed Friday was of a commission that falls for short of being a watchdog.

The IOC's official spokesman later insisted the ethics panel's role had been misunderstood and that the IOC was fully committed to dealing with any new corruption allegations.

"The willingness of the IOC to confront all the issues should not be questioned," spokesman Franklin Servan-Schreiber said. "If there is any new allegation that is substantiated, the IOC will deal with it. I have no

Diack elected IOC member

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 11: Lamine Diack, the new president of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, was elected Saturday as a member of the International Olympic Committee, reports AP.

Diack, of Senegal, was appointed as interim president of the world athletics body after the death last month of Italy's Primo Nebiolo, who ran the IAAF for 18 years. Nebiolo was also an influential figure on the IOC since 1992.

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IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch (L) listens to Françoise Zweifel, secretary general of the organisation, during the opening ceremony of the two-day IOC session in Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday. —AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes word lists and a crossword grid.