

House of Commons appalled at violence

LONDON, Feb 15: The "rising level of violence" in Premier League football matches was condemned in the House of Commons, the Press Association reported on Tuesday, reports AFP.

A motion tabled by Liberal Democrat MP Bob Russell said there had been an "abject failure" by football authorities, managers and club directors to deal firmly with players who bring the game into disrepute.

The Colchester MP said the "growing tendency by players and others to cheat, abuse match officials and generally disregard the spirit of sportsmanship are damaging to the future of the game."

He called on the Government to "demand the football authorities to take action to restore the high standards which were once the hallmark of British football."

The motion comes after Leeds, Tottenham, Chelsea and Wimbledon were charged with misconduct after a series of incidents during Saturday's Premiership matches involving the four clubs.

Leeds and Tottenham players were involved in a pitch brawl, while Chelsea and Wimbledon players clashed in the tunnel after their match.

Euro 2000

Romania planning for tough friendlies

BUCHAREST, Feb 15: Romania, who face England, Germany and Portugal at this summer's Euro 2000 finals, are looking to line up some higher-calibre friendly opposition to help them prepare for the championships, reports Reuters.

"We are in a difficult situation, because most of the teams we have lined up for warm-ups are far from the standard of the teams we will meet in the finals," Romania's coach Emeric Ionescu told Reuters yesterday.

Last week Ukraine cancelled a friendly with Romania scheduled for April. The Romanian Soccer Federation (FRF) have officially protested to FIFA over Ukraine's withdrawal.

Romania will now play two friendlies against Greece, in Athens on March 29 and in Bucharest on June 3, and an away match against the Netherlands on May 27.

Three days after the Netherlands match, Romania will meet a French Brittany representative team.

Finally I will call up Romania's international stars from abroad and put them in two teams to play against each other," a disappointed Ionescu added. "I can not do more."

The FRF said at the weekend it had begun looking for a team to replace Ukraine, but that it was unlikely one would be found.

FRF general secretary Cristian Bivolariu said only Cyprus, Macedonia, Moldova or Latvia could agree to a friendly in April. But Romania's top players were not thrilled by the prospect of playing any of those sides.

"Romania does not need opponents such as Moldova or Cyprus," Galatasaray's Gica Popescu was quoted as saying by local daily Gazeta Sporturilor.

"We need much stronger teams to play in our warm-ups, because we'll be playing against top sides Germany, England and Portugal at the Euro finals."

Baumann hopeful

MUNICH, Germany, Feb 15: Former Olympic 5,000 metres champion Dieter Baumann, facing a two-year ban for testing positive for nandrolone, said after a hearing by the German Athletics Federation (DLV) yesterday he was confident he could compete at this year's Sydney Games, reports Reuters.

"I am hopeful I will not be banned and I'm convinced I will be in Sydney," Baumann said after a three-hour hearing by the DLV's legal committee.

Random tests conducted on October 19 and November 12 showed the 35-year-old German had levels of nandrolone 10 times over the accepted limit. The analysis of both B-samples confirmed the positive dope tests.

His case turned into a traditional whodunnit after experts found nandrolone in the athlete's toothpaste last December. Baumann, who has campaigned against doping, said he had not taken the drug knowingly. He said the nandrolone must have been injected into his toothpaste malevolently and filed legal proceedings against unknown parties.

The results of the (judicial) investigation have encouraged me," he said. "I am confident that the legal committee (of the DLV) will take them into account."

Under DLV rules, the automatic sanction for doping through anabolic steroids such as nandrolone is a two-year suspension, which would effectively end Baumann's career.

The DLV's legal committee will now complete its own investigation before reaching a verdict.

"We are determined to do that as quickly as possible," said DLV official Wolfgang Schöppe, who chaired yesterday's meeting in Munich.

"I don't know how long it will take," said Baumann, who could take his case to arbitration if he were handed a ban. "Probably quite some time."



Winners of the fifth ANZ Grindlays Bank Cup golf tournament pose with their trophies at the Bhatia Golf & Country Club in Chittagong on February 11.

Another British doper

LONDON, Feb 15: Former European 200 metres junior champion Marlon Devonish was named in national newspapers yesterday as the latest track athlete to test positive for nandrolone in a further blow for the British governing body, reports Reuters.

In a statement issued through his manager Mike Whittingham, Devonish said: "I have never taken any banned substance and therefore I have never committed an offence."

Whittingham said he was seeking legal advice on the initial allegations in a Sunday newspaper. Devonish was a member of the British 4x100 metres relay quartet who finished second at last year's Seville world championships.

He is also a training partner of 400 metres sprinter Mark Richardson, who admitted last week he had tested positive for the anabolic steroid.

Richardson, who has denied knowingly taking any performance enhancing drug, will have his case reviewed by the British governing board UK Athletics on Friday.

Former Olympic 100 metres champion Linford Christie, European 200 metres champion Doug Walker and 400 metres hurdler Gary Cadogan have each been suspended from competition.

The council agreed to hold an inquiry, but IAAF spokesman Giorgio Reineri said normal disciplinary procedures would still go ahead. The arbitration panel is provisionally scheduled to consider the cases of Christie, Walker and Cadogan early in April.

IAAF vice-president and doping commission head Arne Ljungqvist said on Sunday the

petition by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) after testing positive for nandrolone.

Their cases will now be considered by the IAAF's arbitration panel.

Christie, 39, has effectively retired from competitive running and IAAF general secretary Istvan Gyulai confirmed the ban would not extend to his current coaching commitments in Australia.

On Sunday an extraordinary meeting of the IAAF council turned down a British proposal to suspend disciplinary action on athletes who have tested positive for nandrolone pending an inquiry into the anabolic steroid.

UK Athletics chief executive David Moorcroft believes food supplements might be responsible for the positive findings and called on the IAAF to declare a moratorium on nandrolone cases.

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IAAF vice-president and doping commission head Arne Ljungqvist said on Sunday the

inquiry could take more than a year and added to British body had given no details of a possible framework.

But on Monday Moorcroft said he still thought disciplinary action could be suspended on nandrolone cases while an initial three-month inquiry was conducted.

"What we are discussing is putting disciplinary action on hold," he said.

UK Athletics were further embarrassed on Saturday when the IAAF announced that pole vaulter Mike Edwards had tested positive last year for several drugs including the anabolic steroid stanozolol. The case had not previously been made public and Ljungqvist told reporters in Monaco the decision to keep secret the test result contravened IAAF rules.

In a statement on Monday UK Athletics expressed concern at the IAAF announcement. "We are surprised that the name has been released and that UK Athletics has not been informed of the release by the IAAF," the statement said.

"UK Athletics has been dealing with this case and the IAAF has been kept fully informed. The Drug Advisory Committee determined that it was not satisfied that there was a case as a result of the test that was conducted in the United States."

Bonfrere looking ahead

LAGOS, Feb 15: Reuters/Internet: Nigerian national team coach Jo Bonfrere said he had put behind him his country's African Nations Cup final defeat by Cameroon and was looking forward to future challenges.

Cameroon defeated Nigeria 4-3 on penalties on Sunday to win the trophy for a third time. New days and new challenges ahead, now my headache is qualifying the under-23 team for the 2000 Olympics," Bonfrere told Reuters. The Olympic Games are scheduled for September in Sydney.

Bonfrere trained the Nigerians to win soccer gold at the 1996 Olympic Games but parted company with them claiming non-payment of his allowances.

He was re-appointed last November in time for the Nations Cup tournament co-hosted by Ghana and Nigeria.

"During the Nations Cup, I was keeping an eye on the Olympic squad at their training camp. Now I have more time for them," added Bonfrere.

He said he will lead the team, which departs for Kampala on Wednesday, into the match against Uganda this weekend in one of the qualifying matches.

The Nigerians, with three points are second in their group, behind Zimbabwe who have six points. Angola is the fourth team in the group.

Fourteen foreign-based players, including three that played in the Nations Cup, have been named in the Olympic squad.

Bonfrere said he was also looking forward to the qualifying matches for the 2002 World Cup tournament which will be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea.

"Building a stronger and better Super Eagles and getting to the 2002 World Cup are my other priorities. I've reflected enough on not winning the Nations Cup and protesting any decision won't change anything."

The Nigerian Football Association (NFA), claiming bad refereeing cost its team the chance of a victory over Cameroon, said on Monday it had protested to the Confederation of African Football.

The NFA accused Tunisian referee Mourad Daami of denying the team a penalty for handball early in the game and claimed Victor Ikpeba's spot kick during the penalty shoot-out had, in fact, crossed the line.

The team will be guests at a lunch hosted by Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo in Abuja on Tuesday, the NFA said.

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Keane takes it in good spirits

LONDON, Feb 15: Roy Keane claims he has no complaints over his sending off during Manchester United's 3-0 Premiership defeat at Newcastle, according to Manchester Television (MUTV), reports AFP.

Television replays have revealed that the United skipper barely made contact with Newcastle's Rob Lee in the challenge that earned him his second yellow card at St James' Park on Saturday.

While Keane was disappointed to receive his marching orders for the sixth time in his Old Trafford career, he also had sympathy for referee Steve Lodge.

"I'm obviously disappointed with the sending off and personally I think I was slightly unlucky," he said.

"But referees, I've always said, have a hard job to do and the ref has made a decision and you just have to get on with it. I've no complaints. The ref has a hard enough job to do and you just have to take the punishment when it comes your way."

"Over the season things even themselves out; sometimes you get away with something you didn't think you should have and I felt I was unlucky this time, but that's my opinion."

Boss Sir Alex Ferguson suggested that Lodge, who also booked three other United players, was determined to take a tough line with the Treble winners because of their treatment of referee Andy D'Urso at Old Trafford at the end of last month.

Keane and several of his team-mates hounded the official off the pitch after he awarded Middlesbrough a penalty.

However Keane believes there is no point moaning and he said: "We've got to accept it and it's no good looking for excuses. We are the biggest and the best and we are there to be knocked."

"Sometimes we don't help ourselves and I think the Middlesbrough incident a few weeks ago hasn't helped our cause and obviously my sending off on Saturday hasn't helped the club's image."

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ESPN honours Jordan again

LAS VEGAS, Feb 15 (AP): It might have been the least suspenseful award of the decade.

ESPN sports television network, which already named Michael Jordan its athlete of the century, made him its athlete of the decade Monday night at the ESPY Awards show.

Jordan won both male athlete of the decade and pro basketball player of the decade in the eighth annual show.

He received a standing ovation from the audience that included Tiger Woods, Mark McGwire, Evander Holyfield and members of the US women's soccer team, among others.

"You guys are making me turn red up here," Jordan said as he got the ovation.

Jordan's former coach, Phil Jackson, was also honoured as coach of the decade and the Chicago Bulls were named team of the decade.

The awards, held in this gambling city for the first time, drew a number of top athletes along with celebrities for the 2 1/2-hour show at the MGM Grand hotel-casino.

In addition to giving awards for 1999 performances, ESPYs were handed out in 15 categories for performances of the decade.

While Jordan won male athlete of the decade, tennis player Steffi Graf was named female athlete.

Woods was also a big winner, being selected as golfer of the decade and of the year. He was also named male athlete of the year.

"This has been a great decade, even though I'm not that old," Woods said. "It all started when I was 14, that fateful day 10 years ago."

The female athlete of the year was Mia Hamm, who played on the US women's soccer team, which was selected as team of the year.

McGwire won baseball player of the decade, while Evander Holyfield was fighter of the decade and Jerry Rice was football player of the decade.

"I treat my career sort of like a good bottle of red wine. You get better with age," McGwire said.

The awards were voted on by a panel of employees of ESPN and the US television network, ABC, as well as some sports journalists and former athletes.

The show featured a somber moment in a tribute to William "Dave" Sanders, the Columbine High School teacher and coach who died trying to save students' lives during the murderous rampage at the Colorado school.

Sanders' family received a courage and humanitarian award named after the late Arthur Ashe.

Lapentti loses. ROTTERDAM, Feb 15: Fourth seed Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador fell 7-6, 6-2 to Swedish qualifier Jonas Bjorkman in the first round of the \$50,000 dollars World Indoor tournament yesterday, reports Reuters.

The other three seeds in action all won. Eighth seed Cedric Pioline of France found little trouble in overcoming Romanian qualifier Adrian Panait 6-2, 6-3.

Fifth seed Tim Henman of Britain, losing finalist last year, eliminated Spaniard Alberto Martin 6-2, 6-2, although he needed four match points to seal the victory.

Sweden's Magnus Norman, seeded three, found more problems against Dutchman Sjeng Schalken but won 6-2, 6-7, 6-3.

Asia Cup qualifying. Kuwait massacre Bhutan. KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Kuwait went on a 20-goal rampage in their Group Five Asian Nations Cup qualifying match against Bhutan on Monday, reports AFP.

The Kuwaitis won 20-0 with Bachar Abdallah leading the way with eight goals, including a penalty.

Even goalkeeper Ahmed Jassem got on the scoresheet, slotting home a 77th-minute penalty.

Charges brought against four Premiership clubs. LONDON, Feb 15: English Premiership clubs Leeds, Tottenham, Chelsea and Wimbledon were all charged with misconduct by the Football Association (FA) on Monday as a result of events at their matches at the weekend, reports AFP.

Leeds and Tottenham have been charged with failing to control their players as a result of a mass confrontation between the sides during the second half of their game at Elland Road on Saturday.

Chelsea and Wimbledon are similarly charged with failing to control their players following an after-match clash in the tunnel at Stamford Bridge.

The clubs and players charged all have 14 days to respond and can request personal hearings if they wish.

The FA have also written to the clubs to warn that they will be held responsible for players showing collective dissent towards match officials.

The move comes after Manchester United were twice involved in such incidents in the last 16 days — against Middlesbrough and Newcastle.

FA chief executive Adam Crozier said: "I have spoken to the Premier League, the PFA and the League Managers' Association today about the action we are taking and all have been fully supportive."

"We made it clear two weeks ago that the game as a whole must improve its conduct and image."



International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch (C) inspecting the Sydney Olympic Stadium yesterday. — AFP photo

Very good news for IOC

SYDNEY, Feb 15: International Olympic Committee reforms received a massive vote of confidence Tuesday when American company John Hancock, whose leader was one of the IOC's most vocal critics following the Salt Lake bribery scandal, announced it was renewing its global Olympic sponsorship, reports AP.

IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch announced that John Hancock had agreed to renew its Olympic sponsorship for a four-year period covering the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Games and 2004 Summer Games in Athens, Greece.

The new deal is reportedly worth US \$50 million dollars.

"The criticism that we faced last year affected the Olympic organization, affected the members, even myself, but the games were not touched," said Samaranch, who was in Sydney for IOC meetings.

Samaranch described the new contract as "a testament to the reforms we made last year."

"As you know (John Hancock) had some doubts about whether to renew or not," he said.

In an internal shakeup following a bribery scandal which engulfed Salt Lake's winning bid for the 2002 Winter Games, 10 IOC members were either expelled or forced to resign.

Others received severe warnings for their conduct. The scandal prompted a wide-scale reform of the IOC and the bidding process.

David D'Alessandro, president of Boston-based John Hancock Financial Services, repeatedly accused the IOC of

failing to take decisive action to deal with the corruption scandals.

At one stage last year, he ordered the Olympic rings removed from company stationery and threatened not to renew the company's sponsorship.

But in a statement released Tuesday by the IOC, D'Alessandro said: "We made no secret of the fact that in order for the IOC to regain our confidence as well as that of the public, it had to become a more democratic, transparent, accountable institution."

"We believe that with its reform vote in December, the IOC has addressed these issues. It's members listened to voices for change from inside and outside the organisation. The IOC leadership deserves credit for this progress."

John Hancock is the fifth company to sign up for the IOC's 2001-2004 worldwide sponsorship programme. The others are Coca Cola, Visa, Time/Sports Illustrated and European computer systems company Sema.

IOC marketing director Michael Payne said deals had been reached with other sponsors and would be announced shortly.

The IOC said its target is to have at least 10 sponsors in the 2001-2004 programme.

Meanwhile, the International Olympic Committee had not ruled out further cuts to its revenue from the Sydney 2000 Olympics if hosting the Games plunged the state of New South Wales into debt, said civil liberties campaigners Tuesday after meetings with IOC officials.

Sydney organisers an-

nounced a 193 million Australian dollars (US 123 million) budget blowout last week before accepting a rescue package involving the IOC, the Australian Olympic Committee and the State Government forgoing their shares of surplus revenue.

But social welfare, indigenous, environment and community action groups had threatened demonstrations to coincide with this week's IOC executive board meetings to protest against the negative spin-offs of hosting the Games.

While IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch was praising Sydney organisers and the venues at Homebush, IOC director general Francois Carrard was meeting with the Olympic Impact Coalition, a campaign representing about 30 lobby groups, at SOCOG headquarters.

Coalition member Gary Moore said he received some reassurance but no assurances from Carrard.

"No guarantees, but if there is a deficit the option of further IOC action was not ruled out," said Moore.

The IOC is certainly very concerned about all the aspects of the social impact (of the Games) but we cannot give any assurances," said Carrard, adding that most problems could be solved locally.

Moore said the meeting could prompt the IOC to introduce social impact assessments on cities bidding for future Olympics.

During a visit to Homebush Bay, the main venue area for the Olympics, Samaranch said he couldn't believe the improvement in the facilities since his last visit two years ago.

China brings Ma back

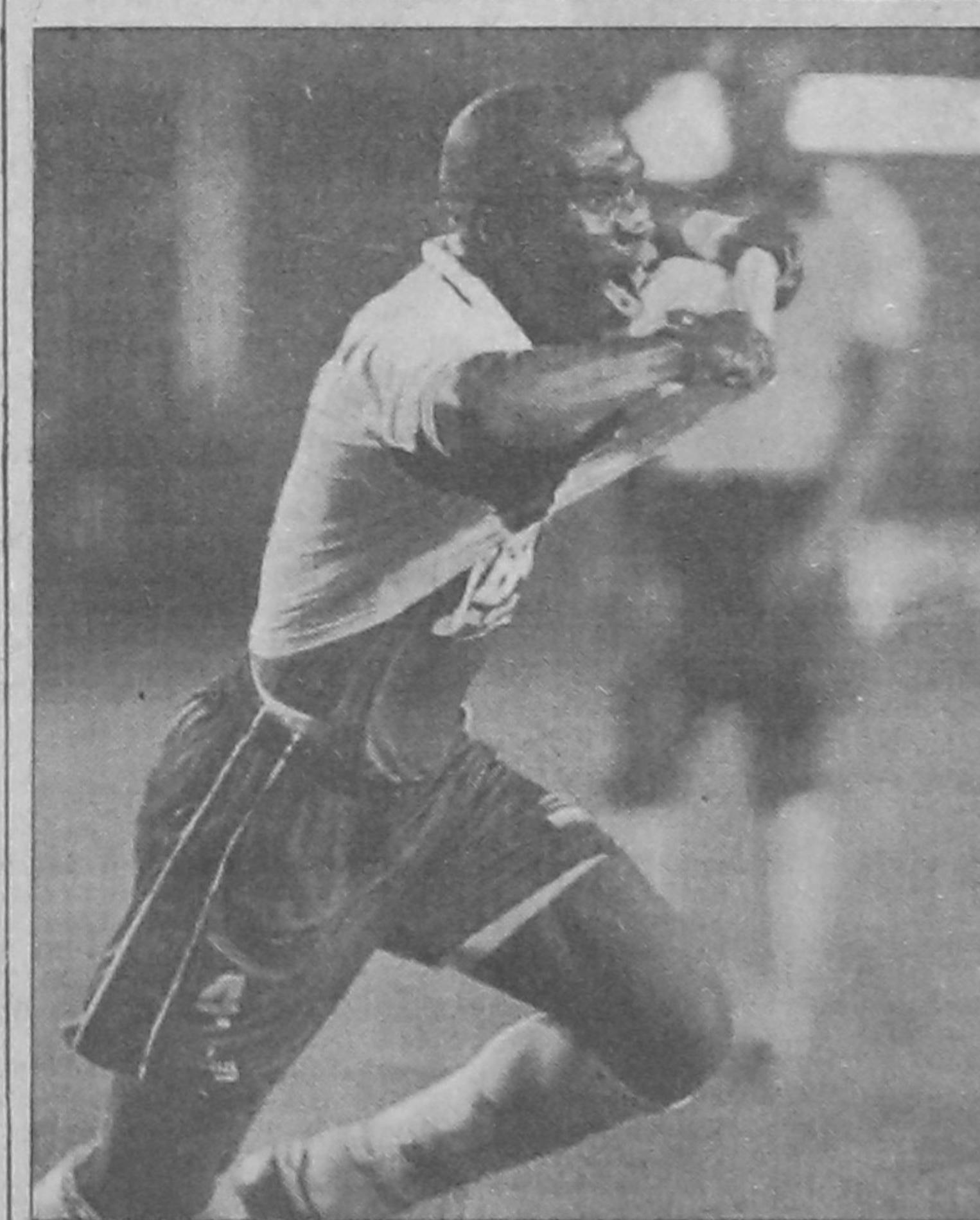
BEIJING, Feb 15: In pursuit of gold at the Sydney Olympics, China is once again turning to famed coach Ma Junren, whose concoctions of herbal remedies and turtle blood helped his women runners stun the athletics world in the 1990s, reports AP.

In something of a comeback for Ma, his latest team of runners are expected to form the backbone of China's middle and long distance running squad at the Sydney Games, the official Beijing Morning Post reported Tuesday.

The heavy-smoking, gravel-voiced and at times high-tempered coach had slipped from view in recent years with reported health problems and disputes with government sports officials. He and his runners were absent, for example, from the 1998 Asian Games.

"Ma's Army" of female runners broke a slew of long-distance world records in 1993. Ma attributed their success to high altitude training, daily marathons and restorative concoctions of turtle blood, fungus and ginseng tea.

Shang Xiutang, a senior government athletics official, inspected Ma's training camp in the northeastern province of Liaoning.



Honduran Jorge Caballero is jubilant after scoring against Jamaica in their CONCACAF Golf Cup encounter on February 14. — AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 Furlive fellow	DOWN	16 Moo-goo-gai-pan
1 Petrol	38 Snap	1 Song-writer	17 pan