

# Star Sport

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## Millions greet the flame

SYDNEY, Sept 14: More than a million people turned out on the streets of Sydney Thursday to welcome the arrival of the Olympic flame, as the host city declared itself ready to stage the greatest sporting show on earth, reports AFP.



On a perfect spring evening, rapt crowds celebrated on the sidewalks as a host of personalities triumphantly carried the flame into the city, shunting drug controversies, and problems of the wind and threatened transport chaos.

On the eve of Friday's formal opening ceremony, the packed football tournament went into its second day of competition. Brazil got their campaign for the men's gold off to a winning start, with Spain, Japan and Chile also taking two points.

In the women's tournament, arch-rivals United States and China negotiated safe openings in their 'group of death'.

Off the field, the North and South Koreans put politics behind them as they agreed to wear identical uniforms when they march together in Friday's opening ceremony.

Swimming icon Dawn Fraser was officially forgiven for her late night flag-stealing romp at the Emperor's Palace during the Tokyo Olympics 36 years ago, being invited by IOC supremo Juan Antonio Samaranch to be his 'first lady' of the Games.

Polevaulters, meanwhile, joined a growing list of archers, rowers, shooters, runners, sailors and beach volleyballers in expressing fears that blustery conditions could disrupt competition and in some cases reduce the outcome to a lottery.

World record polevaulter Sergei Bubka bluntly described conditions as 'dangerous'.

But there was an absence of wind on a balmy Thursday, as Sydneysiders and tourists let their Olympic fever show.

Television reports put the crowd at one million, as celebrities including singer Olivia Newton-John, tennis ace Pat Rafter and golfer's Karrie Webb joined the torch relay.

'I always knew Australians would get behind the Olympics, but I never thought it would be like this,' said former swimming star Murray Rose.

But running with the flame is one thing, taking a bus is another. Desperate Games organisers launched an appeal for 500 volunteer navigators to help prevent out-of-town bus drivers getting lost.

The plea came after more than 100 angry bus drivers quit in a protest over their working conditions, fuelling fears of a rerun of the transport fiasco that marred the 1996 Atlanta Games.

The drugs issue also refused to go away with Uzbek trainer Sergei Voynov, allegedly caught with 15 vials of human growth hormone at Sydney airport, told he will be charged with attempting to import a prohibited substance.

In weightlifting, where there have been several drug suspensions in recent days, the unexpected pull-outs of two Chinese and two Greek lifters darkened the cloud hanging over the sport.

Wanting to compete but being made to wait were legendary Jamaican sprinter Merlene Ottey and Germany's former Olympic 5,000m champion Dieter Baumann.

Ottey, insisting on running the 100m, was told by Jamaican officials she can only start if one of the three athletes who beat her at the trials don't meet set standards in training.

Baumann, not yet in Sydney, will have to wait until the eve of the 10,000 metres heats on September 20 before the IAAF rules if he will be banned for testing positive for the steroid nandrolone.



STARS LIGHT THE FLAME: Australian singer-actress Olivia Newton-John (R) passing on the Olympic flame to compatriot and tennis superstar Pat Rafter in front of the Sydney Harbour Bridge yesterday. The Olympic flame will complete its journey around Australia when it arrives for the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympics today. -AFP photo

## Cool, dry start

SYDNEY, Sept 14: Spectators and athletes will be in for a chilly time when the sun sets on Friday's Olympic Games opening ceremony, but they can leave their umbrellas at home, forecasters say, reports AFP.

The Bureau of Meteorology said near-perfect spring conditions on Thursday would disappear under a cover of cloud on Friday and the temperatures would drop.

'It's a pity the opening ceremony isn't tonight (Thursday),' said Olympic forecaster Tony Bannister. 'It'll be party cloudy on Friday. There won't be any rain but it'll be a lot cooler.'

The bureau have forecast moderate to fresh southeasterly winds reaching 30 kilometres per hour in the morning before easing in the evening.

Temperatures during the opening ceremony are expected to be about 12 degrees centigrade compared to a balmy 28 degrees C maximum at the Olympic site on Thursday.

The first day of competition on Saturday will be partly sunny with light northeasterly breezes and a minimum of 10 degrees and a maximum of 22 degrees.

Showers are expected to develop by Monday.

## Chinese puzzle

SYDNEY, Sept 14: Mystery surrounded the eleventh hour withdrawal on Thursday of high-profile Chinese weightlifters Shi Zhiyong and Cui Wenbia from the Olympic competition, reports AFP.

Asian 62kg champion Shi and Cui, a former world champion in the 105kg snatch division, were among a handful of competitors withdrawn or omitted from the Olympics when the official draw was made on Thursday.

Greek duo Leonidas Kokas, a 91kg silver medalist at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, and Georgios Tzelis, runner up in last year's world championships in the 69kg division, were also taken out of the competition with no reason being given immediately to the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF).

'The four lifters were withdrawn by delegates from their countries at the technical committee meeting which preceded the draw today,' said Jeno Boskovics, an IWF technical delegate.

'There was no reason given for their withdrawals at that time. It is my understanding, however, that the Greek pair are injured.'

The Chinese delegation could not be reached for comment but a source said that weightlifting officials from China told team leaders that Shi and Cui were pulled out after failing to recover from long term injuries.

He added that neither of the weightlifters, whose withdrawal brings the men's team down to six competitors, had travelled to Sydney although they were included in the revised squad list issued by China on September 6.

The last minute pull-outs, which caught IWF officials completely off guard, darkens the competition.

## The corporate Games

SYDNEY, Sept 14 (AFP): Money, politics, and athletes wearing corporate logos — all those things are an everyday part of the Olympics these days.

But according to the editor of a new collection of his writings, they would all have upset Pierre de Coubertin, the French aristocrat who 'founded' the Olympic movement.

'He wouldn't have imagined that,' said Dr Norbert Muller, an expert on the Olympics at Germany's Johannes Gutenberg University.

According to Muller, de Coubertin never conceived the Olympics could become the multi-billion dollar industry they are today.

The Frenchman, who died in 1937, the year after the Olympics were first broadcast on television, 'never believed that television could mean so much money for the Olympics,' said Muller, the editor of 'Olympism', the first major collection of de Coubertin's writings translated into English.

'He spent all his fortune (on the Olympics),' de Coubertin's great nephew, Jacques de Navacelle, said Thursday. 'He was rich and he died poor because he never thought he could ask for anything from anybody. And today we see that many people make money from the Olympics.'

De Coubertin, who espoused the idea of sport as an escape

from politics, would also be surprised at the level of involvement the IOC takes in international politics, Muller said.

When, in 1922, de Coubertin, the IOC President at the time, wrote a letter to US President Warren G. Harding, Harding is reputed to have asked who de Coubertin was, according to Muller.

But in comparison, the academic said, the current IOC President, Juan Antonio Samaranch, is a political figure in his own right, something proven this week when he wrote to the Indonesian president, Abdurrahman Wahid, requesting the release of an IOC member.

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### The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games logo

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games logo represents Australia's promise to host a Games dedicated to the athletes of the world. The boomerangs and suggestion of sun and rocks, together with the colours of Sydney Harbour, beaches and the red interior, evoke the unique Australian landscape and its indigenous peoples.

### Bitter Bubka

SYDNEY, Sept 14: Ukraine's Sergei Bubka said Thursday the unpredictable wind conditions could put himself and his fellow pole vaulters in danger during the Sydney Olympics, reports AFP.

Bubka, the greatest ever exponent of the sport in a long career for the Soviet Union and the Ukraine, believes that the conditions will 'break havoc' with the competition, describing them as 'a nightmare'.

'During the run-up the wind can blow in three different directions' at the same time,' said Bubka, the world record holder indoors and outdoors.

'You can cope with a regular wind but when it is blowing strongly, in gusts, and when it is changing direction it's not nice and it is even dangerous. There could be a lot of surprises,' he told AFP.

Despite his glittering record, 36-year-old Bubka, 1988 Olympic gold medalist and a six-time world champion, is past his best but he would not rule himself out of the gold medal equation.

Asked who would win, he said: 'Whoever lives, will see (who wins).'

### ABSORBING ANECDOTES

SYDNEY, Sept 14 (AFP): Quotes of the day Thursday from the Olympic Games:

'He was rich and he died poor because he never thought he could ask for anything from anybody. And today we see that many people make money from the Olympics.' - Jacques de Navacelle, great nephew of modern Olympics founder Pierre de Coubertin, on the Games as a corporate marketing bonanza.

'I don't think it's the highest priority on their agenda to have a drug-free Olympic Games... If funding's a problem, then let's not fly first-class to every meeting we go to and stay in five-star hotels.' - Richard Quick, women's head coach of the US Olympic swimming team on the IOC's commitment to ending doping.

'The depressin truth is that pharmacologically enhanced athletes are usually one step ahead of the scientists employed to catch them.' - British science weekly Nature in an article on the inadequacy of drug testing.

'Maybe we are full of it. But you have to shoot for the stars or get stuck with the moon. That's our story and we're sticking to it.' - Australian basketballer Lue Longley on the chances of upsetting the US Dream Team.

'That can't happen. It's not even thought of. I know so. We won't lose a game unless we don't show up. We will show up.' - US basketballer Alonzo Mourning on the prospect of the Dream Team losing.

'I can't run or ski but I can walk and paddle. I still get a lot of nightmares but I try to channel any feelings of negativity into positive energy through my kayaking.' - US Olympic team flagbearer Cliff Mcidel, a sprint kayaker who nearly died when he was accidentally electrocuted 14 years ago.

'I fell in love with weightlifting and over the years I built up a very friendly relationship with my coach.' - US weightlifter Suzanne Leathers, who married coach Don McCauley on the eve of the Games.



OUR OLYMPICS: Exasperated by the unbearable temperature and frequent power failure, a group of youngmen cooling themselves off in the waters of the River Buriganga on September 13. -AFP photo

## Sabrina, Samedul on show Saturday

SYDNEY, Sept 14: Bangladeshi shooter Sabrina Sultana and swimmer Karar Samedul Islam will start their Olympic campaign Saturday, the first day of the 16-day sports programme, with a hope to display best individual performance, reports UNB.

Commonwealth gold winning shooter Sabrina will compete in her favourite 10-metre air rifle event on Saturday morning at the Cecil Park Shooting Centre along with 48 others.

With her qualifying score of 387 points, Sabrina is looking for a place in first 20 among the 49 world ranking shooters. 'I will be happy to get a position within the top 20,' she told today.

V Charkasova of Ukraine is holding world championship record of 399 points in Los Angeles in 1991 while P Horneber

of Germany is the holder of the Olympic record in the event scoring 397 in Atlanta, 1996.

Sabrina - practicing at the games venue, some 35 kilometres from the Athletes Village, for last two days - will compete in the 50-metre air rifles-3 position on September 20 at the same venue. Some 42 shooters sent entries in the event.

On the other hand, promising swimmer Karar Samedul will jump into the pool also on Saturday with his dream event - 100 metre breast-stroke hits - at the Sydney International Aquatic Centre.

Samedul, with his best timing of 1:09.51 minute, will participate along with 65 competitors in the event in separate heats. The world record of the event is 1:00.36 minute made by Roman Sloudnov of Russia.

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MILLIES IN MILLIONS! Scores of Millie, the 2000 Olympic mascot, on display at a Sydney store yesterday. Millie is based on an echidna or 'spiny anteater', that has bristling spines and a long, pointed snout. The echidna is found across most of Australia. Solitary by nature, the echidna lives in an underground burrow, using its long, sticky tongue - which it can extend up to 18 centimetres - to feed on ants and termites. Along with the platypus, the echidna belongs to one of the rarest and most bizarre animal subclasses in the world, the monotremes, or egg-laying mammals. -AFP photo



THE HEAT IS ON: A combo of AFP photos showing (L) Chilean super-striker Ivan Zamorano celebrating his hat-trick against Morocco at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and, (R), the Brazilians rejoicing after their equaliser against Slovakia at Sydney.

## Soccer goes Latino

SYDNEY, Sept 14: The men's Olympic football tournament danced to a Latin beat here Thursday as Groups B and D kicked off with Brazil, Chile and Spain all recording impressive victories, reports AFP.

Brazil defeated Slovakia 3-1 in Group D while an Ivan Zamorano-inspired Chile whipped Morocco 4-1 and Spain hammered South Korea 3-0 in Group B. In the other Group D match Japan scored a late winner to see off South Africa 2-1.

### BRAZIL - 3, SLOVAKIA - 1

Brazil's bid for an Olympic football gold, the only major title to have eluded the aristocrats of world football, got off to a winning start.

Goals from centre forward Edu, impressive left back Fabio Aurelio and an injury-time effort from captain Alex secured the win after the well-organised Slovaks had taken a shock early lead.

But despite their technical superiority and some occa-

sional flashes of brilliance, it was a less than convincing display from Wanderley Luxemburgo's young side, who displayed a defensive frailty that belied their status as gold medal favourites.

Brazil dominated the opening exchanges without ever looking dangerous and they were made to pay the price for some complacent defending in the 27th minute.

A Slovakian counter-attack appeared to be petering out as Jan Slahor found himself cornered on the left hand edge of the box by Baiano and Fabio Bilica.

But somehow the Slovak Bratislava forward managed to squeeze between the two Brazilian defenders and clip the ball back for Andrej Porazik to slot home easily from just in front of the penalty spot.

Forced to up the tempo, Brazil equalised four minutes later after a sweeping four-touch move that came straight from the flair football textbook.

Wriggling free of his marker in the centre circle, Ronaldinho

picked out Alex 20 yards upfield. The Brazilian skipper met the pass with an equally precise volley to Edu on the edge of the box.

The big striker made no mistake, chesting the ball down into the space between his two markers and slotting a low right foot shot past into the far corner of the net.

That was the last real chance the Slovaks had. After the break Brazil moved up a gear and it was only a matter of time before they scored again.

In the 67th minute, Fabio Aurelio played a sweet one-two with Edu to break into the box. The left back hit the touchline and fired in a low cross that took a cruel deflection off right-back Marian Csovosky's boot into the Slovak net.

Late substitute Mozart made the Brazilians final goal. After breaking free on the left he fired a low cross across the Slovakian goalmouth for Alex to sidefoot home at the back post.

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