

The Greatest Ritual of Sports

Intercontinental clash

FOOTBALL

SYDNEY, Sept 25: Countries from four different footballing continents clash in the men's semi-finals here Tuesday all chasing Olympic glory, reports Akono.

Only Asia and Oceania are not represented in the final stages - in contrast to football's World Cup, which has been dominated since its inception by European and South American nations.

Spain and Chile represent the traditional powers but their opponents the United States and Cameroon respectively give the last four a truly intercontinental flavour.

CHILE v CAMEROON

Chile are the competition's leading scorers with 11 goals - four of them from Inter Milan's Ivan Zamorano - but Cameroon coach Jean-Paul Akono has attacked their style of football, claiming it is defence oriented.

"We know they have two strikers, very quick, very fast for counter attacks and we have prepared something special for them," said Akono.

"I think Chile play defensive football and try to counter-attack. It is not positive football."

"It is not spectacular for the crowds to see," he added.

"When people come to a match they firstly come to see good football. If that's what they want to see they will get behind us."

The Africans, seeking their first Olympic gold medal, will be without skipper Geremi Njifap and defender Aaron Ngumbat, who were both sent off in extra-time during the semi-final win

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BONDI BEACH BEAUTIES: Aussie fans get behind their women's beach volleyball team in the event's final against Brazil at Bondi Beach yesterday.

—AFP photo

Marion's Mission Immortality

ATHLETICS

SYDNEY, Sept 25 (AFP): For two years Marion Jones has dreamt of just one thing - standing on top of the podium five times in Sydney and becoming the greatest woman athlete the world has ever seen.

The American superstar and two-time world 100m champion, has been driven by a phenomenal amount of confidence in her ability to succeed in her target of a record-busting five gold medals at the Olympics Games.

The last thing she needs is to have her focus diverted, not least by the IAAF, athletics' controlling body, announcing Monday her husband and world shot put champion, C J Hunter, had tested positive for steroids.

The sprint sensation has always been a magnet for the media analysing her remarkable track performances, but now she faces being hounded over the drug allegations surrounding her husband.

On Wednesday, when Jones next takes the track, she will show whether her steely determination has allowed her to block out the news or if her concentration has been broken.

Jones set her five-golds target in 1998, when she was the world's best in the 100m, 200m and long jump.

Her first attempt at the quintet ended in disaster, sprawled on the track at last year's world championships in Seville where she collapsed in the 200m final.

Now the ever-smiling 24-

year-old is back, declaring on arrival in Sydney she was ready to prove wrong the critics who say five from five is impossible.

"I'm not saying I'm Superwoman or that I am invincible, but I do feel I am at the top of my game now," said Jones, who has not been beaten over the 100m for three years.

The world record holder opened her account in Sydney with four sprints in two days to win the blue-riband 100m gold on Saturday.

After three days rest she starts an even more gruelling schedule on Wednesday with the first two rounds of the 200m and the long jump qualifying round.

Thursday is the 200m semifinal and final, followed by the long jump final on Friday then the 4x100 and 4x400 metres relays on Saturday.

It is a demanding programme and there are fears that she risks a repeat of her nightmare in Seville last year.

Pundits then blamed her insistence on doing the long jump - an event that puts damaging stress on the back - and Jones knows she lacks the proper technique.

The long jump is the big question but that's why it is special to me of all the events that I will contest," she said.

"I've learnt a number of things from Seville and have made the necessary changes."

None other than athletics legend Carl Lewis has criticised Jones, saying she was being too ambitious wanting to win five titles and outdo his haul of four in the Los Angeles Games.

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