

Her joy turns into sorrow

SYDNEY, Sept 26: Romanian gymnast Andreea Raducan was looking forward to a joyous 17th birthday on Saturday after following in the golden Olympic footsteps of her idol, Nadia Comaneci, reports AFP.

But instead of a golden celebration, it will be a most bitter-sweet affair.

Raducan tested positive for the banned substance pseudoephedrine and was stripped of her Olympic all-around gold medal here Tuesday, although she was allowed to keep a gold from the team event and a silver won in vaulting.

Team doctor Ioachim Oana gave the girl a cold remedy that contained the drug, which is banned by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) but allowed by the International Gymnastics Federation.

Raducan had been the first Romanian gymnast to win Olympic all-around gold since Comaneci in 1976 at Montreal, where she recorded perfect 10 judge's scores on the way to enchanting the world.

From gold

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from the individual event now to compatriot Simona Ammaran, who finished second.

The decision has prompted a wave of sympathy for the 1.48m-tall Raducan, who earned comparisons with the legendary Nadia Comaneci last week after her dazzling performance.

"It's a real shame because she's only 17-years-old and if she took it, it was only because her doctor gave it to her," said Raducan.

Australian Gymnastics federation chief executive Jane Allen said all involved in gymnastics would be devastated by the affair.

"It's just dreadful," she said. "She's totally in the hands of her team officials and doctor and there's been some horrible, horrible, mistake and now her whole success and career has just gone done a hole."

"Anyone who watched this beautiful young girl perform will just be devastated by this," said Raducan. She is the second gold medalist of these Games to lose her medal after Bulgarian women weightlifter Izzatova Dragieva.

Rezazadeh

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Weller said that Rezazadeh was such an unknown that he could not remember his face or his name.

"I do not want to say too much about him and his victory," said Weller. "Iranians keep coming out of nowhere. It is like a movie by (Steven) Spielberg."

Asked if it was possible for world records to be broken so frequently without the assistance of drugs, Weller brashed the books which detail the times he has been tested.

"I have four books here — you can come up and look at them," said Weller. "I have been tested a lot."

In contrast Rezazadeh said he had been tested just three times recently — once in Iran, once in Sydney eight days before competition and after his victory on Tuesday.

The snatch section set the tone for the thrilling super-heavyweight shoot out with the giants of the sport smashing the world record three times.

Daniyal broke the old world mark of 206kg with a mighty lift of 207.5kg. Weller, who had failed at that weight, upped the bar to 210kg and powered it above his head.

In scenes reminiscent of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics when the excitable Weller celebrated what he thought was a gold medal lift by cheering loudly and throwing his shoes into the crowd, the German stood on the podium with arms aloft and yelled "Yah, Yah, Yah."

But his mark only lasted a few minutes. Rezazadeh, who had held the record at 206kg, marched onto stage, raised his eyes to the heavens in silent prayer and hoisted an amazing 212.5kg — 6.5kg heavier than the mark he set last November.

Chemkerin made a quiet entry into the competition lifting 202.5kg as if it was a plastic toy. The expected big finish in the clean and jerk did not materialise and the Russian policeman finished fourth.

Highbury braces for a 'Super-Lazio' tumble



LONDON, Sept 26: Using a little kidology, Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger says Italian rivals Lazio are "super-favourites" to win Group B of the Champions League but an Arsenal win at Highbury on Wednesday could prove him wrong, reports AFP.

Both teams go into the encounter having won their opening two matches although the Gunners had their fans on the edge of their seats as they had to recover from two goals down to edge Shakhtar Donetsk of Ukraine 3-2 with unlikely hero Martin Keown securing the win with two late efforts.

This could be our year if we don't concede sloppy goals like this. It's difficult when you are behind and chasing the game.

Lazio, meanwhile, cruised to a 3-0 win over Sparta Prague with an amazing 100million pounds (£140million dollars) worth of talent absent from the team.

The starting line-up had an estimated value of 130million pounds (£182million dollars).

Among those who missed out were Argentinian strikers Claudio Lopez and Hernan Crespo, and former Inter and Juventus goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi, all three part of Lazio's 70million (£98million dollars)

summer spending spree.

Yugoslav central defender Sinisa Mihajlovic has been out of action since fracturing a cheekbone in Lazio's opening 3-0 Champions League win over Donetsk earlier this month.

He has had an operation but according to team doctors he will be out for over a month and is expected to miss the Arsenal game. Crespo would be re-

turning ahead of schedule from a leg injury he had to play on Wednesday.

Arsenal will have to frustrate midfielder Juan Veron if they are to stop Lazio taking control. The Argentine international is the Rome side's playmaker and one of the major sources of supply for striker Simone Inzaghi.

The forward created Lazio's first against Sparta Prague and scored the third, bringing his Champions League goal tally to an impressive 12 from 13 games.

Arsenal's retired Dutch international striker Dennis Bergkamp has not been happy at having to fit into Wenger's rotation policy, battling for a place alongside Kanu, Sylvain Wiltord and Thierry Henry.

Bergkamp did start in last Saturday's Premiership match against Ipswich, scoring in a 1-1 draw.

Wenger eventually brought on all four strikers against Donetsk but only as a last-ditch gamble.

Will he play the quartet from the start against Lazio? Bergkamp certainly believes Arsenal need extra forward strength.

"The best thing to do is put them (Lazio) under pressure," he told the Observer. "I think they will come for a draw and try to defend and it will be very tough to get through."

"You don't see Lazio give a lot of goals away. So we must put something extra in attack."

Spain-based Benni sprang to prominence at the 1998 African Nations Cup in Burkina Faso, where he was voted top player and finished joint leading scorer with veteran Egyptian Hossam Hassan.

The coach also lashed Nomve, who has been linked with English Premiership outfit Sunderland, although the Kaizer Chiefs striker headed goals against Japan and Brazil.

"I instructed Siyabonga to play beside Benni, but he constantly drifted out to the left and closed himself down by holding on to the ball too long,"

Mashaba said.

Captain Matthew Booth did not escape the wrath of Mashaba, who slammed the giant central defender for not following instructions and lacking leadership when the team was under pressure.

McCarthy deflected criticism, saying the team was over confident before the Slovakia match, while Booth blamed bad preparations that included just one warm-up match for the timid exit.

Substitute Ferron thought he had won penalty with ten minutes remaining when pulled back by Califit but the Tunisian referee adjudged the offence had taken place outside the box.

And three minutes later Vagenas pulled one back from the penalty spot after Tanguy had fouled Frankie Hejduk.

Spain were content to sit on their lead after the break, though Jose Mari should have sealed their place in the final in the 67th minute but his weak shot did not trouble Friedel.

Substitute Ferron thought he had won penalty with ten minutes remaining when pulled back by Califit but the Tunisian referee adjudged the offence had taken place outside the box.

And Jose Mari got the goal he deserved in the 87th minute, tapping into an empty net after Friedel could only parry Tanguy's shot.

"Jose Mari was involved in

everything today. He has gone from a minus to a plus, plus," said Ruiz.

Clive Charles said his side had suffered from the effects of their win on penalties over Japan in the previous round.

"We played 120 minutes of hard football then had all the emotions of a penalty shoot-out and that took its toll," he said.

"They were a yard quicker today but I'm not disappointed in my team because they have been fabulous throughout the tournament."

He predicted the Spaniards would grab gold in the final.

"Cameroon are very good individually but Spain play better as a team and keep possession," said said.

CAMEROON - 2: CHILE - 1

MELBOURNE: An 89th minute penalty from Arsenal's Lauren Etame Mayer sealed the victory as the Chileans were made to pay a heavy price for squandering a bucketload of second half chances.

Patrick Mboma, the Parma forward who played for Cameroon in the last World Cup, was the indomitable Lions hero, firing home the equaliser after

84 minutes then winning the decisive penalty.

His burst into the Chilean box drew a wild, lunging tackle from Pablo Contreras and the French referee Stephane Bre had no hesitation in pointing to the spot.

Chile had looked like they were on their way to the final when they took the lead with less than a quarter of an hour to play, after the Cameroon back four allowed a hopeful Chilean punt upfield to float over their heads, putting Sebastian Gonzalez in the clear.

Cameroun keeper Idriss Kamieni managed to stop the midfielder's shot but the ball slammed straight into defender Patrice Abanda and back into the net.

Chile should have gone on to kill the game off minutes later when another defensive blunder by the Cameroonian defence allowed Claudio Maldonado to break free with only Kamieni to beat.

With three other Chileans screaming for the ball he somehow managed to sidefoot it straight at the Cameroonian goalkeeper.

Mouth-watering prospects

PARIS, Sept 26: The battle for supremacy in the Champions League gets up on

Wednesday as favourites and Italian champions Lazio head for Highbury to face Arsenal in what should be the match of the evening, reports AFP.

The Dutch looked a far cry from the side that holds the world, Olympic and Champions' Trophy titles as Teun de Nooyer and Stephan Veen let slip a dozen chances.

The Dutch could not score because we did not allow them to," said Pakistani manager Ismail Siddiqui. "God willing, we will go further now."

Dutch coach Maurits Hendriks said: "I have rarely seen us miss so many chances."

"I think the players have been on a mountain so long, they were afraid of falling off it."

But Britain gave the Dutch an unexpected surprise by beating the Germans.

Germany, needing only a draw to move up, found their match in a British side determined to bow out in a high note.

Craig Parfitt and Calum Giles scored for Britain, while Christian Mayerhofer put one in for the Germans.

Veteran Jay Stacy, playing in his third and final Games, was Australia's hero with a penalty corner eight minutes before the end.

Both teams were locked 1-1 at half-time through goals by Song Seung-Tae and Craig Victory in a fast and furious match played under light rain at the start and a stiff breeze right through.

"We have put the poor form behind us and starting to play well again," Australian coach Terry Walsh said.

"We are focused on what we aim to do, and that is to reach the final."

"It will be difficult but it will be a game to enjoy."

Henry added that the decision to play this season's home games at Highbury after two poor Wembley campaigns had paid dividends against Donets.

"I don't think we could have come back if it had been at Wembley. Wembley is a big

pitch but Highbury is very small and with the crowd close I could tell they were scared. To play at Highbury really helps."

The Gunners expect to welcome back steady midfielder Patrick Vieira to the side after he sat out the weekend to attend the tournament.

Defender Tony Adams is also expected to return after a month fighting back problems.

Reigning European champions Real Madrid have already hit their stride in Group A and lead Spartak Moscow and Bayern Leverkusen by a point.

The Spaniards have also found their form in the league and thrashed Athletic Bilbao 4-1 at the weekend despite being without strike pair Raul and Fernando Morientes.

A trip to Leverkusen will determine the 'meringues' ability to soak up pressure away from

home after a gritty showing at Sporting Lisbon on the opening day, where Real came back from two goals down to snatch a draw before sneaking past Spartak at home a week ago.

Spartak themselves will fancy their chances of progressing if they can oust Sporting, who have found themselves cast in the role of whipping boys after letting Real off the hook in Portugal.

Just as last season, Spain is determined to dominate the competition once again and Valencia, Real's final victims last May, are setting a cracking pace in Group C after narrow wins over Olympiakos and at Dutch tailenders Heerenveen.

The Spaniards will now tackle tournament debutants Lyon in the Mestalla Stadium before going to France for the second half of their double-header next week.

Lyon dismissed Heerenveen in their first match but then came unstuck at Olympiakos and should the Greeks likewise see off the Dutch then they should be in the driving seat.

Valencia are set to face Lyon without Argentine midfield su-premo "Kily" Gonzalez while French World Cup winner Didier Deschamps, Swedish defender Joachim Bjorklund and Romanian forward Adrian Ilie are all carrying injuries.

Group D is developing in similar fashion to Group C with a dominant side in the shape of Glasgow Rangers, who have set themselves up for passage to the second phase with a gutsy win in Monaco.

As Rangers bid to put one foot in round two with six points under their belts already under-fire Galatasaray coach Mircea Lucescu is playing down talk of unrest at his club ahead of the clash against the Scottish champions in Istanbul.

Fixtures

(Groups A-D (Games kick off at 04:45 hrs BST on Thursday):

GROUP A At Leverkusen

Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Real Madrid (Spa)

At Moscow Spartak Moscow (Rus) v Sporting Lisbon (Por)

GROUP B At Prague

Sparta Prague (Cze) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)

At London Arsenal (Eng) v Lazio (Ita)

GROUP C At Heerenveen

Olympiakos (Gre) v Heerenveen (Ned)

At Valencia Valencia (Spa) v Lyon (Fra)

GROUP D At Monaco

Monaco (Fra) v Sturm Graz (Aut)

At Istanbul Galatasaray (Tur) v Rangers (Eng)

Discovery Profile Series 5:30 Discovery Magazine

HBO 6:30 Feds 8:15 Against the Wall

10:30 Deadline: Madrid 12:30 See you in the Morning 3:30 Her Alibi

5:30 Arthur 2 on the Rocks 7:15

The Shadow 9:30 Hook 12:15 Sins of the Mind 2:15 Hollywood's Biggest Stunts 2:45 Feds 4:30 Her Alibi

Film: Char Diwari

STAR CHANNEL 6:30 Go For It! 7:30 Ushuaia 8:30

Lonely Planet 9:30 Animal in Survival 10:00 Eyewitness 11:30