



GETTING INTO THE AUSSIE GROOVE: Norwegian fans celebrate with a blown up kangaroo after their country's victory in the women's handball bronze medal game against South Korea yesterday. —AFP photo

Dopers paid dearly Cuban ring kings

SYDNEY, Oct 1 (AFP) — Petite Andreea Raducan, a shining example of the innocence of youth, and C.J. Hunter, a hulking American on the verge of retirement have one thing in common — they are drug cheats.

The International Olympic Committee said so. The Romanian gymnast, with her infectious smile, and the gruff world champion shot putter were the contrasting faces of the Drug Olympics in Sydney.

The new era of a strict zero-tolerance anti-doping policy is in force. To emphasise the point a "drug free" pledge was added to the traditional athletes' oath at the opening ceremony.

Raducan took an over-the-counter tablet for a head cold, which did not help her performance, while Hunter, husband of US track star Marion Jones, returned a positive test showing a concentration of the steroid nandrolone 1,000 times over the limit.

To Olympic chiefs they were both drug cheats, guilty as charged. WADA, the World Anti-Doping Agency, organised a flying squad of drug-busters who conducted more than 2,000 unannounced tests in around 80 countries in the lead up to the Games.

National Olympic committees staged more tests, and a further 2,000 were carried out during the Olympics.

The end result saw more than 60 athletes from 20 countries and 10 sports return positive tests either during the Olympics or in pre-Games competition.

The eight positives in competition are the most since 10 in Seoul in 1988.

Nearly half the Sydney withdrawals were from China which axed 27 athletes two weeks before the Games for "suspicious" blood test results.

Worldwide, the number of unreported positive tests may never be known.

There was a ceaseless whispering campaign about the "real" reason some athletes pulled out of the Olympics citing injury — speculation about Hunter started when he withdrew because of a knee injury days before it was announced he had returned four positive tests.

World records also came under scrutiny.

"I absolutely do not think this is a drug-free Olympics," United States women's swim coach Richard Quick said after 11 world records were set in the pool.

The United States, ever willing to point the finger at others, became the accused when the US Track and Field

was said to have covered up more than 20 positive drug tests in the past two years.

Eleven weightlifters failed drug tests either before or during the Games including four medalists — Bulgarians Izabela Dragneva who won gold, Ivan Ivanov a silver medalist and Sevdalin Minchev who won bronze, as well as Armenian bronze medalist Ashot Danielyan.

The entire Bulgarian and Romanian weightlifting teams were tossed out of the Olympics under the International Weightlifting Federation's bizarre "strike three and you're out" rule. An even quirkier rule allowed the Romanians to pay 50,000 dollars to have their "clean" lifters reinstated.

The drug testing wasn't just about steroids, diuretics and EPO.

Equestrian Eric Lamaze was booted off the Canadian team for cocaine use.

SYDNEY, Oct 1 (AFP) — Cuba leave the Olympics victorious, the Americans return home without a gold medal.

One of sport's enduring rivalries added another chapter at the Sydney Games tournament where the great Felix Savon led the Cubans to four gold medals to remain amateur boxing's premier nation. Savon claimed his third Olympic gold medal to crown a glorious career and equal the record of Hungarian Lazlo Papp and fellow Cuban heavyweight legend Teofilo Stevenson.

The Caribbean boxing superpowers cleaned up all four of their finals on Saturday to repeat their success at the last Atlanta Games — an achievement the Americans can only look on with envy.

Cuba won seven gold and two silver in Barcelona in 1992 and at the boycotted 1980 Moscow Games their boxers claimed six gold, two silver and two bronze, but the competition

is more evenly spread globally these days.

Apart from Savon, bantamweight Guillermo Rigondeaux, lightweight Mario Kindelan and middleweight Jorge Gutierrez won glory for mother Cuba.

Yet there were only accusations, protests and precious little else for the United States, who came to Sydney heralded as potentially the best of the Star and Stripes boxers down the years, only to leave with one of the worst records.

Remaining hopes world featherweight champion Ricardo Juarez and light-welterweight Ricardo Williams were beaten in Sunday's finals leaving the Americans with the meagre return of two silver and two bronze medals.

What grates most is that this is the first time since the 1948 London Games that USA haven't won a gold medal at an Olympic boxing tournament. Sydney's return is two fewer medals than the US won in Atlanta four years ago and one more than they got at Barcelona in 1992.

"I thought we had the potential to win two gold medals here, but the way the officiating went we didn't have a chance," said US head coach Tom Mustin.

"Unfortunately, we were not allowed to do our best, we were not allowed a level playing field. It was slanted toward European countries."

Russia and former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, won five gold medals between them.

Kazakhstan's Olympic champions were light-middleweight Yermakhan Ibraimov and featherweight Bekzat Sattarkhanov, the controversial conqueror of Juarez.

Mahammadkadyz Abdullayev won Uzbekistan's gold and in the process stopped USA's last chance for a win with a 27-20 decision over Ricardo Williams in the light-welterweights.

Russian Alexandre Lebzziak lifted the light-heavyweight crown, while compatriot Oleg Saitov was named the boxer of the tournament after winning his second welterweight gold medal on Saturday.

France, Thailand and Great Britain will take special memories away from Sydney.

The French celebrated their first Olympic boxing gold medal in 64 years with the victory of light-flyweight Brahim Asloum over Spain's Rafael Lozano.

And God Save Queen blared out to tears from super-heavyweight Audley Harrison, who became Britain's first boxing gold since Chris Finnegan punched his way to success in Mexico City 32 years ago.



A CLASS ABOVE THE REST: The US men's basketball team congratulating each other after clinching the gold by beating France 85-75 yesterday. —AFP photo

Perfect strangers

SYDNEY, Oct 1 (AFP) — If you stumbled unprepared into Sydney's Olympic Park during the last two weeks you could have been forgiven for thinking someone had slipped something into your drink... or that you'd landed on the set of Salvador Dali's directorial debut.

Because if Sydney's were the best Summer Olympics ever as some contend then they were also a candidate for the weirdest ever.

The competition was where it all started, of course.

In the pool, Eric "The Eel" Moussambani, a 22-year-old swimmer from Equatorial Guinea, thrashed his way to fame by finishing the 100-metre freestyle more than a minute outside the world record just nine months after learning how to swim.

After losing a quasi-unprecedented three-straight

on their way to an eventual gold, the US Softball team decided "voodoo" was to blame and jumped into the shower en masse one night to exorcise their demons.

On the track there was the perpetually bouncy Maurice Greene licking his chops and thumping his chest on the way to two golds.

But there was also the Greek sprinter no one had heard of — Konstantinos Kenteris — coming from behind to win his country's first athletics gold in more than a century, stunning even his own countrymen.

The stands at Stadium Australia turned into a scene from Zorba the Greek as everyone from the tanned and toned Swedes in their blue-and-gold warpaint to the kimonoeed Japanese danced to bazouki music during intermissions in the play.

Debutant disciplines

SYDNEY, Oct 1 (AFP) — Splishy-splash. Boing Boing Boing. Step two, three, kick. Zzzzzap.

Newcomers to the Olympic sporting family sure made a lot of noise at Sydney.

Synchronised diving, trampolining, taekwondo and triathlon joined the ever-expanding circle of Olympic events at the Games on the 27th Olympiad which concluded here Sunday and each was a well-received debutant.

Divers enjoyed having some company in the spotlight atop the 10m platform and 3m springboard, performing their flips and twists in side-by-side routines.

"I'm very happy synchronised diving was introduced," said Russian diving star Dmitry Sautin. "It's very handsome and very pleasant to look at."

Sautin and partner Igor Lukashin captured men's platform gold. Sautin also took silver in the springboard duet event plus a silver and a bronze in the traditional solo events.

The four new diving events helped increase China's haul to an unprecedented five golds from the diving well and gave a chance for solo competitors to work together for the first time as duos in quest of gold.

"We like the synchro because there is co-operation and we could work together and help each other with our dives," said China's 15-year-old Sang Xue, who won gold in the 10m platform event along with partner Li Na.

For the benefit of flexing sports might, there was held a show two nights on trampolining. Olympic officials assured the

Last cheer for Africa

SYDNEY, Oct 1: Gezahgne Abera of Ethiopia pounded to victory in the men's marathon Sunday, the Sydney Games crossing the finish line with him to the cheers of 100,000 people at Stadium Australia, reports AFP.

Abera led the way in an African treble as Eric Wainaina of Kenya took silver and Tesvaye Tola of Ethiopia grabbed the bronze in the final event of the Millennium Games.

Abera's victory completed a superb Sydney Games for Ethiopia, which also had gold-medal performances from Haile Gebrselassie, Million Wolde and Derartu Tulu in distance events.

Abera finished in 2hr 10min 11sec while Wainaina, who improved on his bronze in Atlanta four years ago, clocked 2:10:31. Tola posted 2:11:10.

The 22-year-old had run himself to exhaustion and needed medical attention before he could collect his gold medal. They raced through wind-whipped Sydney streets to a finish in Stadium Australia, already filled with thousands of spectators for a closing ceremony that organisers promised would be a rollicking farewell bash.

"The wind kept pushing us back," Tola said. "It made it very hard for us."

Hungary finished the Games with a mighty kick on the closing straight, capturing four gold medals in and on the water on the final day.

The reigning men's water polo world champions crushed Russia 13-6 in the championship match, and Hungarian paddlers won four titles on the canoe/kayak course.

With 24 titles decided on the final day, the blustery conditions put the wind up organisers — especially when the last six canoe/kayak finals of the Games threatened to be delayed beyond the scheduled closing ceremony.

But the Sydney luck held, and the races in nearby Penrith produced a genuine Olympic heroine in German Birgit Fischer, who blew the field apart to win her second gold medal of the Games and then announced the end of her 20 year career.

Fischer, 38, bows out with a total of 10 Olympic medals, seven of them gold.

"Sometimes you just have to finish, and it's great to finish on a high," she said.

It could have been the mantra of Sydney's closing days.

The US basketball team withstood another tense finish, defeating France 85-75 to win something their National Basketball Association salaries can't buy: Olympic gold.

"It's nothing like I have ever felt before. It's way up there," US forward Kevin Garnett said. "I don't have the words. I just can't explain."

But there was no such joy for the US boxers, who arrived in Sydney as the most heralded boxing team in the modern era

and left without an Olympic gold medal for the first time in more than half a century.

World featherweight champion Ricardo Juarez and light-welterweight Ricardo Williams were beaten in Sunday's finals leaving the United States with two silver and two bronze medals.

The International Boxing Federation later suspended Russian referee Stanislav Kirsanov for four years but dismissed a US protest against the result of the Juarez fight.

With the mighty US thwarted, the boxing gold rained on less likely contenders.



STAMINA UNLIMITED: Gezahgne Abera of Ethiopia crosses the finish line to win the men's marathon yesterday. —AFP photo

Bittersweet memories

SYDNEY, Oct 1 (AFP) — Venus smiled, the Woodies wept and Yevgeny Kafelnikov added his name to the long list of great Russian Olympians.

But the stars were not the only ones to sparkle in the sunshine at the Olympic tennis tournament.

Christophe Pogon, a wildcard entrant from the tiny African state of Benin, only lasted 38 minutes against Brazil's Gustavo Kuerten. But that was long enough for him to provide one of the moments that make an Olympic Games unique.

At the end of his match he delved into his bag, pulled out a camera and handed it to a bemused ballgirl before posing with Kuerten for a souvenir photograph.

Even a multi-millionaire like Venus Williams was bitten by the Olympic bug. She went home with two gold medals but

says her collection of Olympic pins would be treasured just as fondly.

All of which, combined with sell-out crowds and a string of inspired performances from some lesser lights of the tennis world, contributed to a hugely successful tournament that helped to cement tennis's place within the Games.

But it did not manage to quell the debate over whether the Olympic tournament should continue to be run just like any regular tour event.

Many of the top players would like to see the separate singles and doubles competitions replaced by a team event similar to the Davis or Federation Cups.

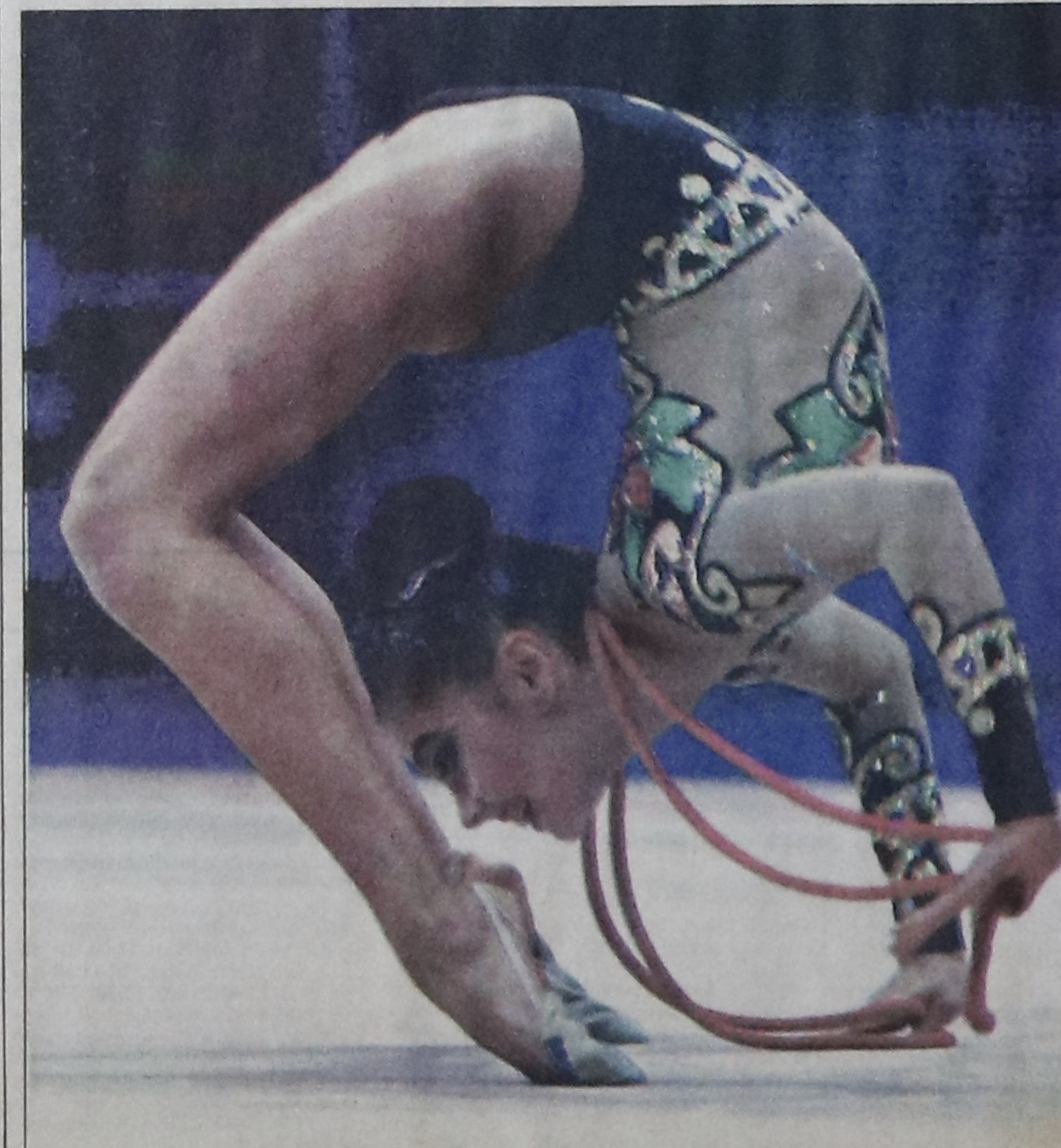
"It's kind of weird that you are all together as a team but then you might have to play each other," said Lindsay Davenport, the gold medalist in Atlanta four years ago who was

forced to pull out here after the first round through injury.

When tennis returned to the Games at Seoul in 1988, many doubted that the pampered multi-millionaires of the professional circuit would be interested in competing with only Olympic glory and national pride up for grabs.

The sceptics would have been encouraged in their view by the fact that neither Pete Sampras nor Martina Hingis could be bothered to make the long trip to Sydney.

By the quarter-finals of the men's singles, only three of the 16 seeds were still standing. Even the passionate — but always sporting — support of 10,000 crowds on the Olympic centre court could not save Australia's highly-fancied trio of Lleyton Hewitt, Pat Rafter and Mark Philippoussis from early exits.



HEAD OVER HEELS! Russia's Alina Kavaeva performs with a rope during the women's individual all-around final for Rhythmic Gymnastics yesterday. Kavaeva won the bronze. —AFP photo

All-time Medals Stand

SYDNEY, Oct 1 (AFP) — All-time Olympic medals table from 1896 onwards. The table includes countries who no longer exist as independent states:

P	Country	G	S	B	T
1	USA	862	655	581	2098
2	USSR	395	319	296	1010
3	G Britain	180	234	233	647
4	France	173	188	200	561
5	Italy	172	137	154	463
6	Germany	163	191	205	559
7	E Germany	153	129	12	409
8	Hungary	148	130	155	433
9	Sweden	138	155	170	463
10	Australia	101	106	133	340
11	Finland	100	80	113	293
12	Japan	98	97	103	298
13	China	80	79	64	223
14	Romania	74	83	108	265
15	Netherlands	61	66	82	209
16	Russia	59	53	46	158
17	Poland	56	72	113	241
18	W Germany	56	67	81	204
19	Cuba	56	44	39	139
20	Canada	51	80	98	229
21	Czechoslovakia	49	45	143	197
22	Bulgaria	48	82	65	195
23	South Korea	46	51	57	154
24	Norway	45	44	41	130
25	CIS	45	38	29	112
26	Switzerland	42	68	58	168
27	Denmark	37	61	57	155
28	Belgium	35	50	49	134
29	Turkey	33	16	14	63
30	New Zealand	30	12	30	72
31	Yugoslavia	28	31	31	90
32	Spain	25	29	22	76
33	Greece	24	35	34	93
34	South Africa	19	20	24	63
35	Austria	17	29	32	78
36	Kenya	16	20	18	54
37	Argentina	13	23	18	54
38	Brazil	12	19	35	66
39	Ukraine	12	12	22	46
40	Ethiopia	12	2	10	24
41	Mexico	10	15	22	47
42	Iran	8	13	19	40
43	North Korea	8	7	15	30
44	Estonia	8	6	12	26
45	Ireland	8	6	6	20
46	India	8	3	5	16
47	Kazakhstan	8	8	4	18
48	Czech Rep	6	6	7	19
49	Egypt	6	5	5	16
50	Jamaica	5	20	12	37
51	Belarus	4	9	19	32
52	Indonesia	4	7	5	18
53	Morocco	4	3	9	18
54	Algeria	4	1	7	12
55	Portugal	3	4	10	17
56	Pakistan	3	3	4	10
57	Lithuania	3	0	5	8
58	Nigeria	2	8	7	17
59	Australia	2	4	5	11
60	Slovakia	2	4	2	8
61	Uruguay	2	2	6	10
62	Croatia	2	2	3	7
63	Bahamas	2	2	2	6
64	Slovenia	2	2	2	6
65	Thailand	2	1	6	9
66	Azerbaijan	2	1	1	4
67	Luxembourg	2	1	0	3
68	Latvia	1	6	3	10
69	Trinidad	1	3	7	11
70	Uganda	1	3	2	6
71	Peru	1	3	0	4
72	Venezuela	1	2	5	8
73	Colombia	1	2	4	7
74	Tunisia	1	2	3	6
75	Uzbekistan	1	2	3	6
76	Costa Rica	1	1	2	4
77	Armenia	1	1	1	3
78	Cameroun	1	1	1	3
79	Syria	1	1	0	2
80	Mozambique	1	0	1	2
81	Surinam	1	0	1	2
82	Burundi	1	0	0	1
83	Ecuador	1	0	0	1
84	Hong Kong	1	0	0	1
85	Zimbabwe	1	0	0	1
86	Chile	0	6	3	9
87	Mongolia	0	5	9	14
88	Taiwan	0	4	6	10
89	Namibia	0	4	0	4
90	Philippines	0	2	7	9
91	Lebanon	0	2	2	4
92	Moldova	0	2	2	4
93	Tanzania	0	2	0	2
94	Puerto Rico	0	1	5	6
95	Bohemia	0	1	4	5
96	Ghana	0	1	3	4
97	Israel	0	1	3	4
98	Iceland	0	1	2	3
99	IOP	0	1	2	3
100	Malaysia	0	1	2	3
101	Haiti	0	1	1	2
102	Saudi Arabia	0	1	1	2
103	UAR	0	1	1	2
104	Zambia	0	1	1	2
105	Ceylon	0	1	0	1
106	Dutch Antilles	0	1	0	1
107	Ivory Coast				