

ATHOC knows

ATHENS, Oct 4: Hosting the 2004 Athens Olympics has become a tougher task after the success in Sydney, the president of organising committee ATHOC Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki said here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Greece will be up against it to match the effort put in by Australian organisers, she added.

Angelopoulos-Daskalaki said she believed Athens 2004 would be the best Games ever, but admitted Sydney had placed the bar very high.

Prime Minister Costas Simitis said at a ceremony welcoming back Greek athletes in Athens that they would prove a small country could organize the Games. Greece has just 10 million people.

Athens is behind schedule and Angelopoulos-Daskalaki admitted that. "We have lost three years," said Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, who has only led ATHOC since May after the resignation or sacking of her predecessors.

"We have a marathon ahead of us but we will have to run it like a sprint," she said. Meanwhile a ceremony at Athens airport, including city mayor Dimitris Avramopoulos and the entire Greek cabinet, welcomed back their athletes from the Games.

The four Greek gold medalists carried the Olympic flag given to the country following the closing ceremony in Sydney. Pyrrhos Dimas, gold medalist in weightlifting at three consecutive Olympics, gave the flag to Avramopoulos, who praised the athletes for their success, including a best-ever haul of 13 medals.

Martina's comeback cut short

TOKYO, Oct 4: US tennis legend Martina Navratilova's first year of her comeback ended in the second round of the WTA Princess Cup tournament on Wednesday, but she promised to play next season, reports AFP.

"Yes, I'm planning I don't know how many tournaments yet, but probably it will be a very similar schedule (to this season)," said Navratilova.

Navratilova, 33, teamed up with Monica Seles for the first time to win their first round Tuesday. They crashed to the Australian-American duo of Jelena Jankovic and Corina Morariu 6-7 (5/7), 2-6 Wednesday.

It was Navratilova's first return to Tokyo since her last appearance in the Pan Pacific indoor tournament in 1994, and her first time in this event since 1990.

Navratilova, who retired in 1994, made a comeback this year by playing only in the doubles event at Madrid in May and then took part in the French Open, Eastbourne, Wimbledon, New Haven and the US Open.

"Basically I just wanted to play Wimbledon, because I was in good shape and I had a good partner," Navratilova said of the reason why she made a comeback to the tennis court.

"Last year, I thought I could have played, but it was too late because I play team tennis every summer. I was going to practice anyway, and then to prepare I decided to play a few tournaments."

Navratilova said the Tokyo hardcourt tournament was the last of her tennis season because she would start playing ice hockey this winter.

Winning the drug war

SYDNEY, Oct 4: The International Olympic Committee's medical commission will intensify its bid to develop a test for human growth hormone (HGH) following the success of the Sydney Olympics, a leading Australian doctor said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Dr Ken Fitch, a member of the IOC medical commission, said the Sydney Olympics were the best in terms of drug testing, despite the committee Wednesday announcing a further two athletes had failed tests.

Fitch admitted a test for HGH would probably not be ready in time for the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

But he was optimistic the medical commission would have a test in place by the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Fitch said the commission, meeting in Lausanne on Sunday week, would push for further funding to increase research into HGH as officials look to put further drug deterrents in place.

"At Salt Lake we're going to be pushing it," Fitch said of HGH testing.

"There's still a lot of work to be done. Salt Lake City is only 15 months away."

"I think Athens is a more realistic option."

More than 2,800 tests were carried out pre-competition and during the Sydney Games - the highest number ever.

Fitch said out-of-competition testing had acted as a deterrent to drug takers, pointing to the high-profile case of US shot put champion CJ Hunter, husband of sprint star Marion Jones.

Hunter failed two tests in the lead-up to the Games, forcing him out of Sydney and into retirement.

"Overall I think there was a very much greater awareness from the athletes that they could be targeted through tests and test positive," Fitch said.

Knight steps down

SYDNEY, Oct 4: Olympics minister Michael Knight announced Wednesday he was quitting politics amid uproar after he vetoed a top award for the planner of Sydney's internationally-acclaimed Games, reports AFP.

His decision to resign from the New South Wales state parliament came two hours after he was attacked by IOC vice president Dick Pound for blocking the award of the gold Olympic order to Sandy Hollow, chief executive of the Games organising committee.

Pound said he was particularly disappointed with Knight's

set the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) for the Olympics. Knight appeared to have been wiped away by the success of the games, hailed by international media and IOC chiefs as the greatest ever.

Even Knight, who earned a reputation for arrogance and ruthlessness in the run up to the Games, appeared to have been forgiven, most commentators saying he had been vindicated by the Olympics success.

Knight, who is still responsible for the Paralympics beginning here on October 18, he told reporters he had made the

"exceptional contribution" to the success of the Games.

Speaking from his office in Montreal, Pound told ABC radio here: "This was not the view apparently shared by Michael Knight and it went so far that he said he would not accept his if Sandy got one."

"I think that's a shame. We didn't want to do anything to mar the closing ceremonies and embarrass anyone in Australia at the conclusion of such a magnificent event so it did not go through at that time."

"I must say it was a particularly disappointing attitude at a time when everyone should have been rejoicing and not being mean in spirit."

But Pound said it was still possible the IOC may find a way to honour Holloway with the gold award which it considered he deserved.

Holloway, SOCOG's chief executive, had been progressively sidelined by Knight, who in the last month before the Games appointed a senior public servant, David Richmond, as SOCOG director-general over Holloway.

Then in a final blow on the day of the Opening Ceremony, Holloway was told there was no place for him in the prestige seating, although Richmond and his wife were there with Knight.

The IOC's Australian vice-president Kevin Gosper said he was "very surprised" by Knight's decision to resign, saying no one in the Olympic movement had known of his intentions.

"I think he should enjoy great credit for these most successful games ever," Gosper said. "It's a tough job and it took a tough person. It wasn't a popularity contest."

Knight has already thrown his support behind Jacques Rogge to replace Samaranch as International Olympic Committee (IOC) president.

"I've always hung back from saying this, but I think if the IOC wants to keep the reform process going, then the only sensible decision is Jacques Rogge," Knight said.

There's a decency and integrity about Rogge and he works in a very cooperative way and I think that's what the IOC needs.

"But I don't have a vote and I don't aspire to have a vote."

Samaranch is to step down as IOC president next year and a successor will be elected in July.

Knight's comments were a clear snub to Gosper, who is also campaigning hard for Samaranch's job.

Gosper fell out of the minister's favour when the Olympic torch was lit in Greece in May. Gosper allowed his 11-year-old daughter to be the first Australian to carry the torch, in a move that caused huge resentment here.



TOAST OF THAILAND: Wijan Ponlid (R) who captured gold at Sydney Games, poses with his wife on arrival at Bangkok Airport yesterday.

-- AFP photo

Red carpet rolled out for Wijan

BANGKOK, Oct 4: Thailand's Olympic boxing champ returned home to a hero's welcome as hundreds of flag-waving fans and officials flocked to Bangkok's airport base to greet him, reports AFP.

After touching down from Sydney late Tuesday, Wijan Ponlid thanked the crowd and promised to defend his hard-earned Olympic gold.

"You will see me get another Olympic gold in Athens," he told a cheering crowd.

Wijan is only the second Thai to win an Olympic gold medal after featherweight boxer Somluck Kamsing won gold in Atlanta four years ago.

After a long welcoming ceremony by some of the country's top sports officials, Wijan was finally able to catch up with his family, including his proud wife Chulaporn.

"What I need from him is to still remain the same Wijan, even though our lives will change significantly from now on. I hope that he will not be distracted by celebrity status," the Nation daily quoted her as saying.

The flyweight boxer's win over Bulat Jumadilov of Kazakhstan has not only earned him a gold medal and celebrity status throughout the country, but is also likely to turn him into an overnight millionaire.

The 24-year-old policeman will receive at least 22 million baht (\$523,800 dollars) from Thai sponsors of the Games, including Thai Airways International, as well as from the country's most popular newspaper, Thai Rath.

Also coming his way are 5.3 kilograms (11.6 pounds) of gold jewellery, a house, a job promotion to sub lieutenant, and one year's worth of free flights on Bangkok Airways.

Wijan will have an audience with King Bhumibol Adulyadej on Friday, before returning to his home town of Sukhothai in central Thailand where the celebrations -- including an elephant procession -- begin again.

They don't wanna go home!

SYDNEY, Oct 4 (AFP): At least six overseas athletes are refusing to go home after the Olympic Games which ended here at the weekend, reports said here Wednesday.

The Georgian Olympic Committee (GOC) is reported to have said weightlifters Valery Sarava and Mukhran Gogiyev and wrestlers Guram Mchedlishvili and Alexander Tsertsvadze had refused to return home.

A report from the Interfax news agency said the athletes had decided to stay in Australia.

"Georgian Olympic committee officials have no idea why the athletes have decided not to come back," GOC secretary David Kintsurashvili told Interfax in the Georgian capital Tbilisi. He described the behaviour of athletes as "unprecedented."

Two athletes from Tunisia and Gabon have also disappeared, just before they were due to fly out of Sydney, ABC radio reported.

However, the immigration department said most of those who came to Australia for the Olympics were on special visas which were still valid.

"Most of the athletes and Olympic family members who came to Australia for the Games entered Australia on Olympic Travel Authorities," an immigration spokesman said.

"They are visas that are valid until November 1, 2000. So unless an individual's visa has expired or they have lodged a further application to remain in Australia they're not of concern to immigration."

"It is not an immigration issue,"

Susanthika declines offer

COLOMBO, Oct 4: Sri Lanka's first female Olympic medal-winner, Susanthika Jayasinghe, caused more ripples here Wednesday by publicly turning down a scholarship offered by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, reports AFP.

The 24-year-old sprinter who returned home Tuesday after winning bronze at the women's 200m event, said she did not want the scholarship announced in Wednesday's state-run Daily News.

"The president's secretary, K. Balapatabendi, informed Susanthika that the president was pleased to offer her whatever assistance to enhance her talents to achieve greater success in the future in the field of sports," the Daily News said.

However, Jayasinghe said she did not need such help.

"I am grateful to the president for offering this scholarship, but it would have been better if they thought about it before I went for the Olympics and at a time when I was facing a lot of trouble," Jayasinghe said.

She said she sold her four-

wheel drive vehicle to raise money to travel to California and pay for a training programme. She said her expenses were being met by her sponsor, Nike.

Even though she rejected Kumaratunga's offer of a sports scholarship to undergo training in any part of the world, Jayasinghe recalled that the government had offered 10 million rupees (128,000 dollars) to any athlete who made it to the finals in any Olympic event.

She was welcomed by thousands of fans who lined the 35-kilometre (21 mile) drive from the airport to the capital Colombo on Tuesday.

"I am glad that even those who opposed and obstructed me are pleased with the medal I won," Jayasinghe told reporters at the airport. "I hope they will allow me to continue my training so that I win a gold next time."

Sports Minister S. B. Disanayake was conspicuously absent from the welcome ceremony.

In sharp contrast, Disanayake had led a similar

victory parade for Jayasinghe when she returned to the island after winning silver at the 1997 World Championships in Athens.

Jayasinghe dropped a political bombshell at a press conference in Sydney accusing the sports minister of trying to have sex with her and attempting to ruin her career after she turned down his advances.

There has been no reaction from the sports ministry or the government to the allegations, which until Jayasinghe's latest public remarks were disguised as innuendo.

The government-controlled Daily News on Monday accused Jayasinghe of talking out of turn at a press conference which the paper said had been called "to fete the gold medalist Marion Jones."

The government-run paper said Jayasinghe had reportedly said: "find me another country."

However, Jayasinghe Tuesday denied she was planning to leave the country and said she was determined to win a gold for Sri Lanka at the next Olympics.

Serena tames Tamarine

TOKYO, Oct 4: Serena Williams made a convincing debut in Japan on Wednesday by quashing a challenge from Tamarine Tanusugarn in the second round of the WTA Princess Cup tournament.

Fresh from winning the Sydney Olympic women's doubles gold with her elder sister Venus, the American second seed blitzed her way with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over the Thai ace.

Five-time champion Monica Seles, the top seed, fought off an unexpectedly tough challenge from qualifier Miroslava Vavrinec of Switzerland for a 6-4, 6-4 victory to join Williams in the quarterfinals.

Julie Halard-Decugis and Amy Frazier were easy winners with the French fourth seed beating Nicole Pratt of Australia 6-1, 6-3 and the American fifth seed trouncing Angeles Montolio of Spain 6-0, 6-1.

"I hit on it for the first time this morning," second-seeded Williams said of the Ariake Coliseum centre court. "I think it plays rather slow, but I like hard courts. I like it a lot."

Tamarine, whose Olympic

hopes were dashed by Venus Williams in the second round, tried to attack Serena Williams' second serve and get to the net on short balls to have three break chances in the opening game.

But after she failed to cash in, Tamarine found it hard to win a point and soon found herself 0-5 down as the 1999 US Open champion stood firm on her serve.

Although Tamarine staved off three set points in the seventh game of the first set, she never had another break chance throughout the 71-minute match to fall victim to

Williams for a fourth straight time.

Williams said her foot injury which forced her out of the US Open was "about 70 per cent," and her match against Tamarine was "4.5 out of 10."

"Because I wasn't serving great today, I didn't hit my returns as well as I usually do, and I really tried to come to the net a little more. Overall, I will definitely improve," said Williams.

In the quarterfinals on Friday, Williams will take on either eighth seed Jelena Dokic of Australia or Lina Krasnoroutskaya of Russia.

Meanwhile Seles, who trounced Vavrinec in their only previous encounter, giving her only one game last year here, found her way tougher this time against the 118th-ranked Swiss.

"I don't remember the match from last year. Today I played better on key points. Otherwise it was a very close match," said Seles.

"I had difficulty moving. I was slow to react. I had a lot of opportunities to break her but didn't capitalize on them. Her serve became more of a weapon."

Two more dopers

LAUSANNE, Switzerland.

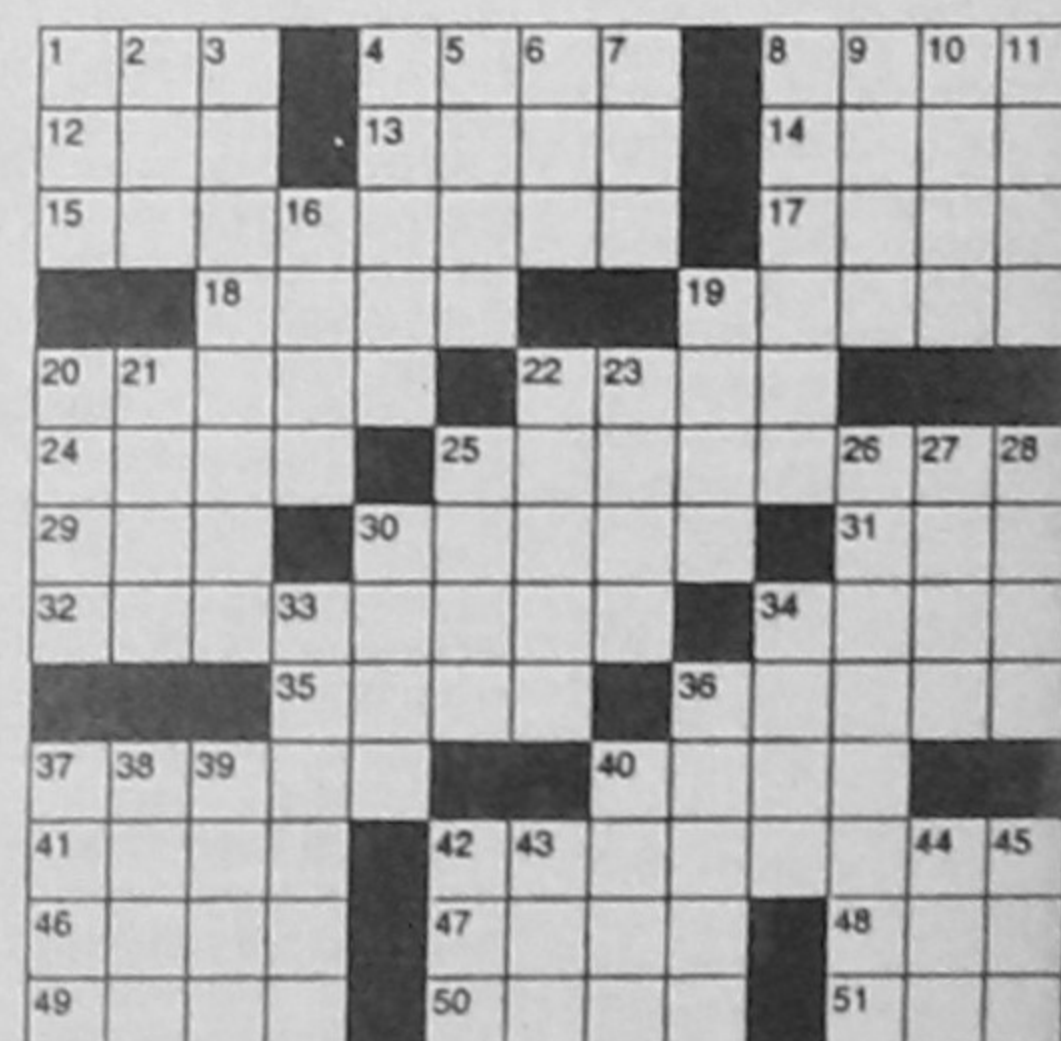
Oct 4: Two more competitors failed drug tests in the last two days of the Olympic Games in Sydney, the International Olympic Committee announced on Tuesday, reports AFP.

The respective delegations and international federations concerned have been informed and the IOC medical commission will call a meeting of the interested parties in the next 30 days, the IOC said.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Yesterday's answer



CRYPTOQUIP

N U R I B Y G R A
S L I A B K S S M S G Y M B B C
R H C R H M F K . Y Q S L N M Q G
Y G R L I Q S F U S S G
Yesterday's Cryptquip: A POOR CHIMNEY SWEEP TOLD ME HE SAW HIS DOCTOR. UNFORTUNATELY, HE HAD THE FLUE.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals M

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



An AFP file photo of and Minister for the Olympics and Sydney 2000 Organising Committee President Michael Knight MP. Knight announced that he was quitting politics yesterday.

decision to veto the honour, describing it as "mean-spirited."

Holloway received the silver after Knight told International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch that he would refuse a gold order for himself in protest if Holloway was given the gold.

The veto, described by the state opposition as "an act of bastardy," touched off a storm of protest similar to those which accompanied the scandal and bloodletting that soured the Olympic organisation before the start of the Games on September 15.

But the mishaps which be-

decision to resign in January, and would leave state parliament in December.

He said he would continue to run what he hopes will be the best Paralympics ever and complete the wash-up of the Sydney games before taking a holiday at Christmas.

He also defended his decision to recommend a silver for Holloway saying it was the appropriate award.

Pound described Knight's attitude as "particularly disappointing," saying the IOC executive committee had decided unanimously to give Holloway the gold order because of his

point or make very easy mistakes. You have to be consistent against her, because once you make a few easy mistakes she'll run over you and it can go really fast, but I'm playing well. Better than last week."

Kournikova blamed her defeat on poor movement, but pointed out she had enjoyed a good year by reaching six semifinals and five quarters. Only the Grand Slams had been a real disappointment to her. She lost in the fourth round of the Australian Open, the second round of the French and Wimbledon, and the third round of the US Open.

"I made too many mistakes today," she admitted. "Last week I lost the first set and then began to play unbelievably, but today it didn't happen. I just made too many unforced errors and didn't play out the points. I don't think I was moving well today so I was in the wrong position to hit the ball. It was just one of those days."

Capriati fought off three match points in the tie-break to take Rubin to a third set in their all-American clash, before Rubin prevailed in a little over two hours.

In other matches, Barbara Rittner of Germany surprised Russia's Yelena Likhovseva 6-2 7-5. Justine Henin of Belgium lined up a second round meeting with top seed Martina Hingis by beating Gala Leon Garcia of Spain 6-4 6-2, and Jana Kandarov of Germany overcame Russia's Tatiana Panova 6-3 6-2.

2 Kenyan boxers go missing

NAIROBI, Oct 4: Two Kenyan boxers have failed to return home from the Sydney Olympics and their whereabouts remain unknown, head of the Kenyan Olympic delegation Jackson Tuwei said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Light-welterweight Frederick Munga and middleweight Peter Kariuki, both bronze medalists at the 1999 African Games in South Africa, were missing when the rest of the team arrived back in Nairobi on Monday.

Family and friends of the two, including Kariuki's one-year-old daughter, Tiffany, who were at the airport to receive them, were disappointed when they failed to show up.



Russian Anna Kournikova stretches to make a return during her first round match in the Porsche Grand Prix at Filderstadt, Germany on October 3.

-- AFP photo