

Asif 7pts too far

SPORTS REPORTER



Commonwealth Games gold medalist Asif Hossain Khan wanted to improve on his personal best when he lined up with the best at the Marco Polo Shooting Range in the men's 10m air rifle at the Athens Olympic Games yesterday.

But the Bangladeshi shooter, also a SAF gold winner, failed to fulfil his dream. Asif, the first of the four Bangladeshi athletes participating at the Games to go into action, crashed

out in the 60-shot qualification round with a score of 587.

It was also the first time any Bangladeshi has competed in any Olympic Games shooting competition.

The 16-year-old from Pabna, who won gold in this event at the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002 and the SAF Games gold medal earlier this year in Pakistan, finished 35th among 47 competitors.

Asif's scores in his pet event were 99, 98, 96, 97, 98 and 99, which is three points shy of his best of 590 in Manchester.

The young prodigy set out on crossing the qualification barrier, which was a bridge too far for him. The

eight lowest qualifier for the gold medal battle was 594.

Asif, who trained in Germany ahead of the Olympics, had admitted before the trip that he had very little chance to go beyond his best after adopting new technique. Still, as a debutant Asif could feel he at least tried his best and will learn from his experience.

The shooter now has a chance to improve his marksmanship thanks to a four-year special training abroad before the next Olympiad in Beijing.

While Asif's performance was below his expectations, his Indian rival Abhinav Bindra preserved his

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Last U-19 Test begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team will desperately be looking for an improved performance by the batsmen when they take on their English counterparts in the third and final four-day Test starting at Glamorgan today.

The Richard McInnes boys have already lost their first official Test series after going down by five wickets in the first match and by eight wickets in the second.

In both the Tests, the junior Tigers' top-order batting was found wanting like their senior brothers.

Injured skipper Enamul Haq will miss the Test as well as right-arm pacer Nazmul Hossain, who is expected to return home within two days to join the national camp for the ICC Champions Trophy.

LATEST

AFP, Athens

South Korea's Lee Won-Hee dumped Russian Vitaliy Makarov in the men's under-73kg judo lightweight final to add Olympic gold to his world title Monday as Japan's medal charge screeched to a halt.

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PHOTO: AFP

FORGET USA! Members of South African 400m freestyle relay team are ecstatic as they see last man Ryk Neethling touching the finish line ahead of the chasing pack at the Olympic Aquatic Centre in Athens on August 15. Favourites USA could only manage a bronze in the event.

Not so American

AFP, Athens



It's early days but America's sporting aura of invincibility is under assault at the Athens Olympics.

Two seismic shocks have rocked the Stars and Stripes in the opening days of the Games with Puerto Rico stunning the United States' Dream Team basketballers and the American women shedding their 16-year unbeaten run in the 4x100m freestyle in the pool.

This follows the Americans' failure

to qualify for the defence of their Olympic baseball title after a 2-1 loss to Mexico in Panama last November and another loss to Mexico to miss out on a place in the 16-team men's football competition.

If anything encapsulates America's struggling opening to the Olympics more it was their 92-73 basketball humbling to Puerto Rico on Sunday.

It was America's first Olympic defeat in the 25 games since National Basketball Association (NBA) players began playing at the Olympics with the Michael Jordan-led Dream Team at the 1992 Barcelona Games.

Co-captains Tim Duncan and Allen Iverson and rookie LeBron James were

among the young collection of NBA millionaires embarrassed by a team that was crushed by the Americans in an exhibition game two weeks ago.

The result didn't go down too well back home with US papers describing Puerto Rico's Olympic upset as humiliating and suggesting that the nation that invented basketball had begun to take its supremacy for granted.

"US men's basketball falls flat on world stage," read the headline in USA Today. "The US men's basketball team was rocked, shocked, humiliated and exposed," it went on.

The New York Times dubbed it a "Wake-Up Call for Dream Team" and described how "Puerto Rican flags

shook wildly as the American team... exited into a tunnel, beaten, stunned and embarrassed."

The 24-0 US run included three consecutive gold medals but now the squad must fight back in a preliminary group that also includes Lithuania, Australia, host nation Greece and Angola just to make the top four and the medal rounds.

There was another big splash in the swimming pool with America's crack women's 4x100m freestyle relay team going under to Australia on the opening night of competition on Saturday.

It the United States' first loss in

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Chittagong MSC remain afloat

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN RIAD, Ctg



Chittagong Mohammedan Sporting Club kept their Super Six hopes alive when the home side cru-shed Najirpara Kirra Chakra of Chandpur 3-0 in the opening match of the

fourth and final leg of the fourth Nitol-Tata National Football League second phase at the MA Aziz Stadium here yesterday.

Needing a win to stay afloat in the tournament, the popular black and whites began brightly and returned with their first win after two losses and a draw

as Zahid struck twice and set up the other for Walid.

After squandering a 12th minute chance, Walid opened the scoring with a splendid header when he connected Zahid's right-flank cross in the 20th minute.

Zahid doubled the lead nine minutes after the breather when he nodded home a corner by substitute Rintu.

Adjudged man-of-the-match, Zahid sealed the fate of the match in the 77th minute with a right-footed drive from inside the box after meeting a lob from Ridon.

Najirpara, whose dreams of

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ATHENS STREET TALK



AFP, Athens

Ryk Neethling, a perennial international medal contender in freestyle distance events in the 1990s, saw his switch to sprint swimming pay off with Olympic gold in South Africa's stunning 4x100m record-breaking relay in Athens.

Not only has the 100m free given the 26-year-old Neethling a longed-for Olympic title, it's not as much of a grind as the 1,500m.

"I wish I had gone down to the 100m a lot sooner," Neethling said.

"Two laps is a lot easier than thirty."

SPITZ'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

Mark Spitz, whose seven swim-

ming victories at the 1972 Munich Olympic remains the Olympic gold standard, was in the stands at the Olympic Aquatic Centre to see Michael Phelps try to take another step toward matching that feat. Phelps has won one gold already but having only taken bronze in the 4x100m medley, he must win six events in a row to achieve his aim of matching Spitz's record of seven golds at the 1977 Olympics.

"I hope he does it," Spitz said.

"He's entitled to it. He's got a lot of courage. I like that."

JAPANESE PM HAILS JUDOKAS

Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi telephoned Olympic judo champions Ryoko Tani and

Tadahiro Nomura to congratulate them on their gold medals.

Koizumi said he was so excited he could not sleep on Saturday night.

LAST ACTION HERO

United States water polo star Tony Azevedo scored on the buzzer to give his team a 7-6 win over Croatia and paid back his coach's faith.

Ratko Rudic had cleared Azevedo to take the shot during the last timeout.

"We knew that Tony would take the last shot, we just didn't know if he could make it. You can plan for it, but you can't always expect a goal."

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THE TALLY				
Country	G	S	B	Total
China	7	3	1	11
Australia	5	1	3	9
Japan	4	1	0	5
Italy	2	1	0	3
Turkey	2	0	1	3
Ukraine	2	0	1	3
USA	1	4	3	8
Russia	1	3	2	6
France	1	2	2	5
Germany	1	1	1	3
Hungary	1	1	1	3
Thailand	1	0	1	2
South Africa	1	0	0	1
Poland	0	2	0	2
Netherlands	0	1	3	4
Slovakia	0	1	1	2
Korea	0	1	0	1
Georgia	0	1	0	1
Great Britain	0	1	0	1
Indonesia	0	1	0	1
Portugal	0	1	0	1
Serbia/Montenegro	0	1	0	1
Spain	0	1	0	1
Cuba	0	0	3	3
Belgium	0	0	2	2
Bulgaria	0	0	2	2
Korea	0	0	2	2
Argentina	0	0	1	1



PHOTO: AFP

DRIBBLING TO NOWHERE! Indian star Dhanraj Pillay (R) dribbles through two Dutch defenders during their match in the first round of the men's hockey competition in Athens on August 15. The Netherlands won 3-1.

What to WATCH

BTV

Nitol-Tata National Football League
Sk Russel vs Bangladesh Air Force
Live at 2:15 pm
BU Dhaka vs MSC Jhenidah
Live at 4:15 pm
Athens Olympic Games
Highlights
Live at 8:30 pm

ESPN

Football Focus
Live at 6:30 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm

TEN Sports

India A vs Kenya
Live at 12:30 pm



PHOTO: AP

THAT'S CALLED SHOCK! Two dejected US basketball players sit and watch their team going down to tiny Puerto Rico during the men's basketball preliminaries at Helliniko Indoor Arena in Athens on August 15.

South Africa stop Phelps

REUTERS, Athens

South Africa ruined Michael Phelps' dream of winning a record eight gold medals in a dramatic and controversial day of swimming at the Athens Olympics on Sunday.

After winning gold on the opening night, Phelps had to settle for bronze as the United States suffered a shock defeat in the men's 4x100 metres freestyle relay, ending his chance of beating Mark Spitz's record of seven gold medals at a single Olympics.

The Americans finished third with the Netherlands second as the South African quartet of Roland Schoeman, Lyndon Ferns, Darian Townsend and Ryk Neethling wiped half a second off the world record to claim the gold.

"We knew we had it in us," Ferns said. "We had to get it out in front and hang on from there. That's the truth and that's what we saw."

The US went into the race as favourites but were out of contention as soon as the first leg when Ian

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Kiss Andy for \$500!

REUTERS, Athens

Andy Roddick is watching his back with the Australian women's water-polo team ready to pay 500 dollars to the first girl who lands a kiss on the US Open champion at the Athens Olympics.

"I'm thinking it's going to be a hit-and-run attack while I am standing in line for food or something," said the American tennis champion, aware there is a price on his head.

"I find it pretty funny, but I'm gonna be like the basketball men, you know. I'm holding out for more money!"

After being knocked out of the doubles tournament on Monday with teammate Mardy Fish, he said: "I've got an inside source who is supposed to be doing the research for me to figure out if they are planning an ambush or what."

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