



PHOTO: AFP

TOUCH DOWN! An ecstatic teammate comes flying in on USA's Abby Wambach (L) after her winning goal against Brazil at the Karaiskaki stadium in Athens.

Crawford dents Gatlin's dream

AFP, Athens

Shawn Crawford denied fellow American Justin Gatlin a sprint double on Thursday as he set up a United States clean sweep in a controversial Olympic men's 200 metres final.

The race was marred by ugly scenes and delayed for five minutes when the packed 75,000 crowd at the Olympic Stadium hijacked the event by booing, whistling and chanting "Kenteris, Kenteris!" and "Hellas, Hellas!"

Costas Kenteris, Greece's Sydney Olympics 200 champion, withdrew from the Athens Games after missing a drugs test in mysterious circumstances the day before the opening ceremony.

Despite the furore, Crawford timed 19.79 seconds, a personal best and the best time of 2004. Only seven men have ever run quicker.

Silver went to Bernard Williams

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Picture-perfect Hamm farewell

AFP, Athens



American superstar Mia Hamm was given the perfect send-off as the United States rode their luck to beat Brazil in extra-time and win the Olympic women's football gold medal for the second time in eight years.

A 2-1 victory that did not come without a huge slice of fortune provided a fitting farewell for the 32-year-old striker, who is hanging up her boots after 17 years on the international stage.

After receiving her medal, Hamm's eyes welled up with tears as she and her team-mates blared out the national

anthem before milking the applause of the delirious American fans draped in a US flag.

"I couldn't have picked a better way to go out," beamed Hamm, a key figure in the 1991 World Cup triumph and in the US team's gold medal victory in the inaugural Olympic women's final at the Atlanta Games in 1996.

"I feel honoured to be part of this group and I feel honoured to represent this country.

"It's been a wonderful journey that has let me experience a whole variety of emotions.

"It has taught me a lot about life and about the value of friendship."

In truth, Hamm's swansong on Thursday was not her best performance, but it mattered not as Abby Wambach's dramatic extra-time

header silenced the samba stars for whom striker Cristiane was outstanding.

Women's football's most recognisable star, Hamm, who scored more than 150 goals in over 250 appearances, dedicated Thursday's win to those members of the squad who didn't make the cut for Athens.

"It's not just about the players that were here," she said. "You have to remember that there were 30 players in the pool before it was trimmed down."

"Even those who didn't come played a part by keeping everyone else on their toes."

Asked which moment stood out in a remarkable international career that began when she was just 15, Hamm replied: "I couldn't pick one."

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Third U-19 ODI washed out

SPORTS REPORTER

The third and final one-day international between Bangladesh Under-19 and England Under-19 was abandoned yesterday without a ball being bowled at Hove in Sussex. The visitors lost the series 1-0.

The Bangladesh youth team making their first official tour of England, earlier went down in the three-match 'Test' series 2-0.

The English boys recorded a comprehensive eight-wicket victory against the visitors in the second match on Thursday. The opening one-day at Arundel on August 24 was also rain-affected.

A Latin gold game

AFP, Athens

Argentina are determined to make up for their agonising Copa America defeat to Brazil last month by winning Saturday's Olympic men's football final against Paraguay.

Marcelo Bielsa's side were leading the Brazilians 2-1 with just eight seconds left only for Adriano to equalise in the third minute of stoppage time. His last-gasp strike took a bad-tempered final to a penalty shoot-out and Brazil prevailed 4-2.

The last time Argentina won a football trophy was in 1993 when they lifted the Copa America in Ecuador and if any extra motivation was needed the country has not won a gold medal in any event at the Olympics for 52 years.

They won their last gold medal at the 1952 Helsinki Games.

"The Olympic Games are a great chance for us to make it up to the people," said striker Javier Saviola, who along with all but two members of the Argentina squad went to Peru for the Copa America.

"We haven't won anything for 11 years and it's about time that

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BCF recruits Russian GM

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) has decided to hire Russian Grand Master Alexander Volzhin to prepare the local players for the upcoming Chess Olympiad in Melilla, a Spanish island, from October 15.

The 34-year old Russian, who had earlier visited the country in 2001 to play an international tournament, will arrive in the capital on September 15 to prepare ten players (six men and four women) for the biennial event.

A BCF official informed yesterday

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Abahani off the mark

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani all but guaranteed a semifinal berth in the Fourth Nitol-Tata National Football League with a solitary goal win over Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra in yesterday's final-phase opener at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur National Stadium.

Stand-in captain Arif Khan Joy scored the winner halfway through the first half as Abahani secured top spot in the six-team table with seven points, thanks to the four bonus points they carried from the previous phase.

Premier League runners-up Sheikh Russel, who failed to produce last season's magic on a rain-soaked slow pitch, remained stuck on one point and now face an uphill task to finish among the top four.

It was Abahani's first ever win against National League newcomers Russel, who drew 1-1 and won 1-0 against the Dhaka giants on their premiership debut.

Russel, however, threatened to score early when Moroccan forward Younnes let fly a powerful drive from the edge of the penalty box after 14 minutes. But Abahani keeper Nizam

not only passed the test he also used his reflexes to foil a close-range header by Milon the very next minute after Russel rightback Kamal sent a fine cross from the right.

Chasing their first silverware in three seasons, Abahani came back strongly but Cameroon's Ndem fired the ball over the crossbar after meeting a cross by Khokon near the penalty spot.

Abahani's top scorer Khokon once again split the rival defence to set up Ujjal inside the box but inspired defending by Moroccan central defender Burdeep denied the young Abahani striker a shot on the goal.

Abahani earned two corners inside two minutes and the pressure finally told when man-of-the-match Joy, completely unmarked in the six-yard box, slotted a right-side flag-kick by Parvez into the roof of the net with a glancing header in the 23rd minute.

Russel should have equalised on the stroke of the first half but stopper Narayan's low drive after a corner was brilliantly blocked by Abahani fullback Siraji on the line.

After the break defenders dominated the show as pitch conditions deteriorated due to rain. Abahani got better openings but Burdeep's out-

standing performance at the rear kept Ujjal and Khokon at bay.

Ujjal still came close to widen the margin when Ndem set him free but the youngster's 69th minute effort was saved by custodian Biplab who rushed out of his line to keep the shot out for a corner.

Earlier, State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman declared the super six stage open but the start of the Dhaka-leg drew a very smallish crowd after larger attendances in the previous legs.

A minute's silence was observed before the start in memory of the victims of last week's grenade attack on an Awami League meeting while Abahani wore black badges.

Yellow cards: Rezaul, Mintu, Asad (Russel KC)

TEAMS

ABAHANI: Nizam, Hassan, Siraji, Shawkat, Masud Rana, Ujjal, Joy, Pranotosh, Parvez (Wali, 78th minute), Khokon and Ndem.

RUSSEL KC: Biplab, Narayan, Burdeep, Rezaul, Kamal (Bulbul, 55th), Asad, Nurul Islam, Apu (Asif, 32nd), Mintu, Younnes and Milon.

Referee: Ramkrishna Ghosh.



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani's Cameroonian recruit Ndem (L) battles for the ball with Russel KC defender Kamal during their National Football League match at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur National Stadium yesterday.

Woolmer being bullish



AFP, Amstelveen

Bob Woolmer has said his Pakistan team can beat world champions Australia in Saturday's triangular final and insisted he has no problems handling mercurial fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar.

"Why not? Someone's got to do it," said Woolmer when asked about Pakistan's chances during their training session here Thursday at the VRA Ground where the final will take place.

Pakistan had a lively two hour practice which the players genuinely seemed to enjoy whilst also being happy in each other's company.

That was in marked contrast to an incident which took place in July shortly after Woolmer's appointment when Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq and fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar exchanged angry words at a training session before the new coach intervened to prevent things getting out of hand.

Woolmer, who succeeded legendary Pakistan batsman Javed Miandad,

said he had no problems dealing with the Rawalpindi Express.

"Shoaib and the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) management had a fall-out. I can't worry about that. My job is to get the best team on the field.

"I had to develop a rapport. We had two or three meetings. And eventually it was a case of Shoaib if you don't turn up for camp you won't play and you won't be selected and you make the choice'. The rest as they say is history."

The former England cricketer added that his desire to make individ-

uals responsible for their own fitness training was already bearing fruit, citing an incident after Pakistan's 66-run-win against India in last week's tournament opener -- the only completed match so far of the rain-marred triangular event.

"After the game against India, eight people went for a run in the park at 9 pm (1900 GMT) at night.

"No-one asked them to do that. They just got hold of the trainer and said let's go for a run.

"Now that Shoaib Akhtar and people who have the reputation for not doing that sort of thing, a reputation that is completely unfounded."

And Shoaib, even allowing for the understandable tendency of players to talk up their current national coach, appeared sincerely upbeat about Woolmer's influence.

He even went as far as suggesting that Woolmer could be the key to a Pakistan victory in what was their first one-day international against Australia since an 82-run defeat in the fiery opening match of last year's World Cup at the Wanderers in

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BOB WOOLMER

THE TALLY				
Country	G	S	B	Total
United States	28	31	25	84
China	25	17	12	54
Australia	16	11	16	43
Russia	15	21	24	60
Japan	15	9	10	34
Germany	12	13	17	42
France	10	7	10	27
Italy	9	7	8	24
Romania	8	5	5	18
Ukraine	8	4	7	19
South Korea	7	10	6	23
Great Britain	7	8	10	25
Greece	6	4	3	13
Hungary	5	7	3	15
Netherlands	4	8	8	20
Sweden	4	1	2	7
Norway	4	0	1	5
Spain	3	9	5	17
Poland	3	2	4	9
New Zealand	3	2	0	5
Turkey	3	1	2	6
Canada	2	5	2	9
Cuba	2	4	7	13
Belarus	2	3	7	12
Brazil	2	2	2	6
Slovakia	2	2	2	6
Georgia	2	2	0	4
Bulgaria	2	1	8	11
Chinese Taipei	2	1	1	4
Ethiopia	2	1	1	4
Thailand	2	0	4	6

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What to WATCH	
BTV	
Athens Olympic Games	
Highlights at 8:30 pm	
SET Max	
Videocon Cup	
Australia vs Pakistan (Final)	
Live at 2:30 pm	
ESPN	
English Premier Football League	
Blackburn Rovers vs Man United	
Live at 5:40 pm	
Chelsea vs Southampton	
Live at 7:55 pm	
Arsenal vs Norwich City	
Live at 10:10 pm	
STAR Sports	
English Premier Football League	
Aston Villa vs Newcastle United	
Live at 7:55 pm	
Man City vs Charlton Athletic	
Same Day Delay at 10:00 pm	
TEN Sports	
Sri Lanka vs South Africa	
Fourth ODI	
Live at 10:00 am	



PHOTO: AFP

FROM BRONZE TO GOLD: USA's Shawn Crawford (L) sprints ahead of compatriot and 100 metre winner Justin Gatlin in the men's 200m final at the Olympic Stadium in Athens on August 26.