



Iraq ban lifted

INTERNET, undated

A last-minute appeal by an Iraqi government delegation bore fruit Wednesday when the International Olympic Committee reversed a decision made last week and gave the go-ahead for four Iraqi athletes to compete in the Beijing Olympics. Two rowers were given the green light by their international federation to join two athletics competitors - also given international federation go-ahead earlier - after the IOC relented.

The IOC last month barred Iraq from the August 8-24 Games after the nation's government dissolved the National Olympic Committee (NOC).

The IOC accused the government of serious political interference in the affairs of the country's supposed independent committee.

However, the IOC confirmed in Beijing Wednesday that it had

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Did U Know?

Only six baseball teams remain from the original National League, which was founded in 1876.



TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v India
Second Test, Day Two
Live from 10:45am

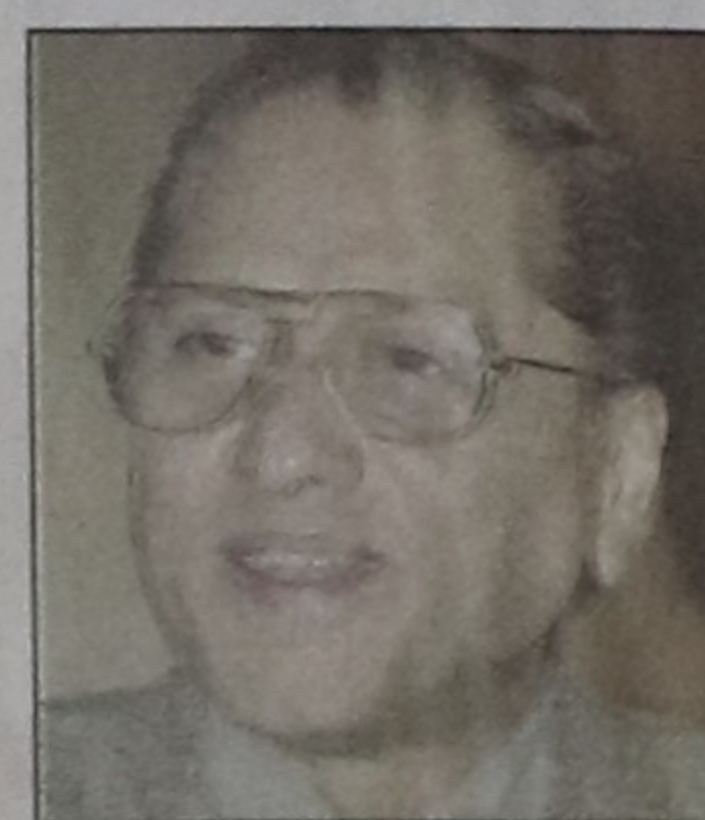
STAR Cricket

England v South Africa
Third Test, Day Three
Live from 4:00pm

ESPN

AFC Challenge Cup
Tajikistan v India
Live from 4:25pm

Afghanistan v Turkmenistan
Live from 6:55pm
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Jagmohan Dalmiya

(Former BCCI president)
"Cricket in the state needs me, that's why I'm back."

Explains why he contested -- and won -- the Cricket Association of Bengal elections on Wednesday.

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Sehwag shines in rain

Cricket

AFP, Galle

Ajantha Mendis and Chaminda Vaas led Sri Lanka's fightback after Indian opener Virender Sehwag missed out on a rare feat of scoring a century before lunch in the second Test here on Thursday.

Sehwag was unbeaten on 91 at the lunch-break before hammering a robust 128 not out for his 15th Test hundred on a rain-hit opening day. He dominated a 167-run stand for the opening wicket with Gautam Gambhir (56).

But unorthodox spinner Mendis and veteran left-arm seamer Vaas did not allow India to capitalise on a strong start, sharing four quick wickets to reduce the tourists to 214-4 in the first innings at stumps.

Only four batsmen - Australians Victor Trumper, Charles Macartney and Don Bradman, and Pakistan's Majid Khan - have scored a hundred before lunch on the opening day of a Test.

It was the second time that Sehwag had missed out on the rare distinction, having smashed an unbeaten 99 before lunch against the West Indies in St Lucia two years ago.

India were comfortably placed

at 151 for no loss at lunch, but their batting woes began when play resumed in the last session after more than three hours were lost due to rain as four wickets fell in the space of 11 runs.

Mendis trapped Gambhir leg-before and had Rahul Dravid (two) caught by Malinda Warnapura, while Vaas accounted for ace batsman Sachin Tendulkar (five) and former captain Sourav Ganguly to put the hosts back into the match.

Sehwag did not let the long rain-break affect his concentration, hoisting Mendis over long-on for a six and then driving the bowler for a four to complete his century off just 87 balls.

India, who had collapsed twice against spin in the opening Test in Colombo, called the shots in the morning as Sehwag and Gambhir averaged more than five runs an over.

Sehwag was more aggressive, putting the Sri Lankan attack to the sword with rich strokeplay on an easy-paced track after his team elected to bat. He has so far struck two sixes and 19 fours in his 122-ball knock.

Gambhir was lucky to survive on 13 when he edged seamer Nuwan Kulasekara to first slip, but Kumar Sangakkara, apparently distracted by wicketkeeper Prasanna

Jayawardene diving in front of him, failed to hold on to the ball.

The lapse proved costly as Gambhir continued to provide valuable support to Sehwag. He struck eight fours in his solid knock.

Sehwag offered a difficult chance on 90 off spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, the edge going between the wicketkeeper and slip fielder Mahela Jayawardene for a four.

Gambhir was initially adjudged leg-before by on-field umpire Billy Doctrove of the West Indies, but asked the official to review his decision. Doctrove was proved right after consulting TV umpire Mark Benson of England.

A new experimental rule allowing players to seek a second opinion on umpiring decisions is on trial in the ongoing series.

Each team is allowed three unsuccessful review requests per innings but if one is successful they will get an additional appeal.

Sri Lanka lead 1-0 in the three-match series following their victory by an innings and 239 runs in Colombo.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the second Test between

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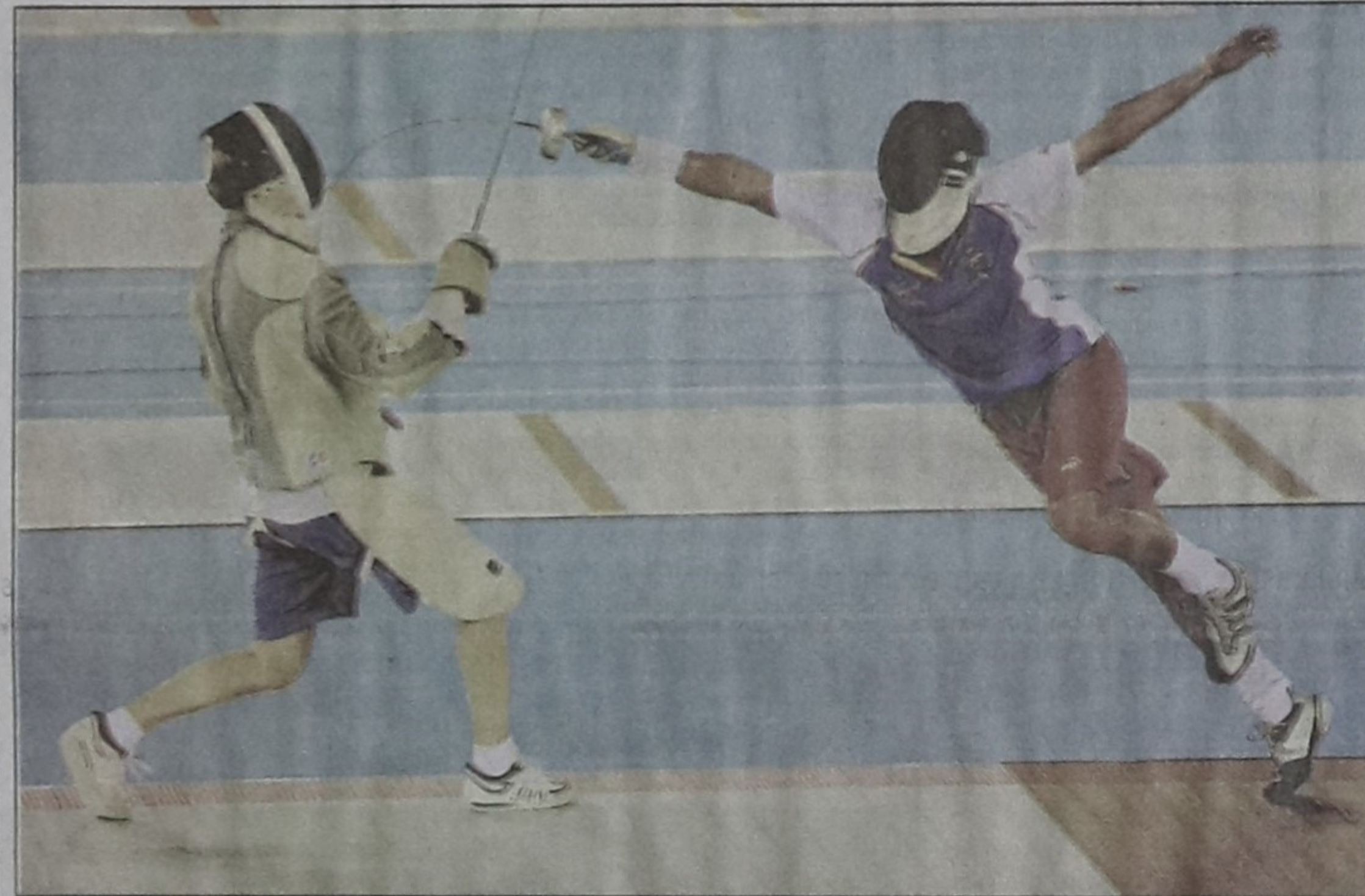


PHOTO: AFP

Unidentified fencers from Venezuela practise in the Olympic Fencing Hall in Beijing yesterday.

Eyes out for big 'losers'

AFP, Melbourne



The Olympic movement has a long history of loveable losers but debate rages over whether they embody the spirit of Games or are a distraction unworthy of competing alongside the world's top athletes.

Ski-jumper Eddie "the Eagle" Edwards, swimmer Eric "the Eel" Mousambani and the Jamaican bobsleigh team all caught the sporting world's attention at the Olympics, even though they never had a hope of winning a medal.

Despite the misgivings of Games officials, the wildcard system that allowed some of the worst performers in Olympic history to compete remains in place for Beijing and speculation has already begun about potential flops in the making.

Mousambani, from Equatorial Guinea, remains the highest profile loser to emerge at a summer Olympics following his inept but

dogged performance in the pool at the Sydney Games in 2000.

Urged on by a roaring crowd and monitored closely by concerned lifeguards, Mousambani flailed his way to victory in a 100m freestyle heat after his only two rivals were disqualified for false starts.

Gasping for breath, he finished in 1:52.72, a minute slower than other heat winners.

He later revealed he had learned to swim only months before the Games and had never before been in a 50m pool.

Mousambani gained instant celebrity and a short-lived sponsorship from a swimwear manufacturer, overshadowing many athletes who had trained for years to reach the Games.

It was a similar story for Edwards, who became a cult hero ski-jumping for Britain in the 1988 Calgary winter Olympics, and the Jamaican bobsledders, who competed at the same Games and had a Hollywood movie made about their exploits.

But IOC president Jacques

Rogge said in 2003 that he would like to get rid of the wildcard entries that give rise to such accidental heroes, even though he acknowl-

edged the underdogs were always wildly popular with sports fans.

"We want to avoid what happened in swimming in Sydney," Rogge said at the time. "The public loved it, but I did not like it."

"The Olympic Games are a mixture of pure quality -- that is, the best athletes in the world and at the same time athletes of lesser quality who achieve universality."

Regardless of Rogge's view, the wildcard system remains, giving a shot at Olympic glory to athletes from developing nations represented by six athletes or less at the Games.

Britain's Observer newspaper last month nominated Elis Lapienmal, a female 100m sprinter with a personal best of 13.10, and Palestinian swimmer Hamza Abdu, who practises in a half-size pool, as potential successors to Mousambani.

Should either of them achieve, maybe they would surely reflect the sentiments of the founder of the modern Olympics, Baron Pierre de Coubertin: "The important thing is not winning but taking part. What counts in life is not the victory but the struggle; the essential thing is not to conquer but to fight well."



PHOTO: STAR

Action from the Citycell Federation Cup football tournament's qualifying round match between Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force at the Army Stadium in the city yesterday. Navy won 1-0.

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PHOTO: AFP

ATTACK IS THE BEST FORM OF DEFENCE: India batsman Virender Sehwag goes on the sweep during his unbeaten 128 against Sri Lanka on the opening day of the second Test at the Galle International Stadium yesterday.

A team no match for du Plessis

SPORTS REPORTER

A blazing knock from Francois du Plessis ensured Lancashire's six-wicket victory over Bangladesh A at Moss Lane in Alderley Edge on Tuesday.

The South African born right-hander blasted seven boundaries and half a dozen sixes in his unbeaten 82-ball 91 that guided the Roses to victory with 13.2 overs to spare after the visitors were bowled out for 182 in 45.5 overs.

But Lancashire were in early trouble when paceman Dollar Mahmud picked up three quick wickets. He removed Karl Brown (4), Paul Horton (17) and former Australian batsman Stuart Law (7) as Lancashire were reduced to 64 for four in the 15th over.

Mahmud had both openers Horton and Brown clean bowled and Tamim took the catch that removed skipper Law. Mal Loye, the attacking right-hander, edged slinger Rubel Hossain to wicketkeeper Dhiman Ghosh for 19.

But du Plessis took matters into his own hand and added 119 for the

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Russel make it a Moroccan trio

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel brought another Moroccan under their wing for the Citycell Federation Cup and upcoming B. League when they signed Said-E-Zanzoun.

The attacking midfielder put pen to paper alongside countryman Touati Youness, the striker, at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Bhabanyesterday.

The 30-year-old Zanzoun will play in Bangladesh for the first time. He played professional football in Oman, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates while it is Youness's third season in Russel's books after making his Dhaka debut in 2005.

Central defender Bourdif Mohammad, also Moroccan, will join the team on August 3.

Bourdif have been playing for Russel for the past five seasons

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Volleyball Federation will organise a training camp prior to forming the national youth volleyball team that begins at the Mirpur Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium from today.

Thirty spikers will undergo training at the camp. Later, 18 players will be selected for the final training.

National volleyball team coach Shaimim Al Mamun will conduct the camp as the head coach with Shah Mohammad Jahangir Alam acting as his assistant.

The federation president Golam Qudus Chowdhury will formally inaugurate the camp as chief guest today.

PIONEER FOOTBALL

Sohel scored seven goals as Swadhinata KS crush Dhaka Eleven 8-0 in a second phase match of the

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Flintoff's feat in Eng toil

Cricket

AFP, Edgbaston

Andrew Flintoff took his 200th Test wicket as England tried to claw their way back into contention on the second day of the third Test against South Africa at Edgbaston Thursday.

South Africa were 205 for four at tea in reply to England's 231 all out.

Flintoff dismissed top-scorer Neil McKenzie for 72 to become only the second Englishman after Ian Botham to score more than 2000 runs and take 200 wickets in Tests.

At that stage South Africa were 135 for four and another wicket might have brought the game close to parity. But Jacques Kallis and Ashwell

Prince shared an unbeaten 70-run stand to keep South Africa on top.

Kallis, who scored only 24 runs in his first three innings in the series, was unbeaten on 48 at tea. He was not entirely convincing, with two successive boundaries scored off the edge against yorker-length balls.

On 37 an attempted forcing shot off Paul Collingwood deflected onto the thigh of wicketkeeper Tim Ambrose.

The left-handed Prince, who made centuries in the drawn first Test at Lord's and in South Africa's ten-wicket win in Leeds, took 18 balls to score his first run but was on 24 not out.

He batted confidently but twice scored boundaries off edges

through a vacant slip area.

Flintoff and James Anderson both toiled hard but Ryan Sidebottom, who missed the second Test because of injury, bowled only four overs during an extended afternoon session.

England's day started frustratingly when McKenzie and night-watchman Paul Harris defied the England bowlers until 15 minutes before lunch on a rain-shortened morning, putting on 77 for the second wicket.

Harris, who started batting Wednesday evening after the dismissal of South African captain Graeme Smith, batted for 89 minutes and faced 54 balls before he edged Sidebottom to Alastair Cook

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