

## True to type

"I am a performer. I come down here to perform and if the people enjoy themselves I did well. This is my job. I won't change."

Jamaican star-sprinter Usain Bolt spares no punches in his verbal joust with IOC president Jacques Rogge. Rogge cited that Bolt should show his rivals more respect was replied by a pound-for-pound reply from the Jamaican who loves playing for the crowd.



## Messi's golden gift to Argentina

AFP, Beijing



Argentina remain Olympic football champions after a goal engineered by superstar Lionel Messi inspired them to a 1-0 win over

former champions Nigeria in the gold medal match at the Beijing Games on Saturday.

Messi disentangled himself from Nigeria's tight marking to put teammate Angel Di Maria clear on goal early in the second half of a final played in sapping 35-degree mid-day heat before a near capacity crowd of 89,102 at the National Stadium.

Benfica's Di Maria chipped over the advancing goalkeeper Ambruse Vanzekin to break the deadlock and score what proved the winning goal in the 58th minute.

"It was a dream game. All I could think of was thank God the ball went over the line and now thanks to that I have a gold medal," Di Maria said.

Argentina successfully defended the Olympic crown from their 1-0 win over Paraguay in Athens four years ago. They are now unbeaten in 12 matches stretching over two Games, an Olympic football record.

Nigeria went in with the psychological edge of beating Argentina 3-2 in the corresponding final 12 years ago in Atlanta to become the first African Olympic champions.

But although Nigeria kept Messi in check for the most part, he ultimately

sunk them with his exhilarating skills in a decider twice halted for water breaks for the heat-stressed players.

"We didn't play our best football today but this victory is a good one for us," Messi said. "The fact that we have been to the athletes village and met famous sportsmen, it's all an experience that we will not forget quickly."

Messi, who almost didn't play in Beijing with Barcelona wanting him back in Spain in time for the Champions League third qualifying round matches, came close to scoring 13 minutes from the end, but was thwarted by a brave covering tackle from Nice central defender Onyekachi Apam.

Messi once again proved Nigeria's nemesis after undoing them in the final of the 2005 FIFA under-20 World Cup in Utrecht when he earned and converted two penalties in a 2-1 win.

"Messi terrorises not only our team, but all teams in Europe. He didn't score but he created a lot of their chances. That is why we have the silver and they have the gold," Nigerian coach Samson Siasia said.

"We're very disappointed, but it means we came second in the Olympic Games. We had a lot of good scoring chances, but you have to score goals to win the gold medal."

The defending champions began well with Di Maria put clear by skipper Juan Riquelme in the ninth minute and was brought down on the edge of the box.

Hertha Berlin right winger Solomon Okoronkwo, the only over-aged player in the Nigerian squad,

produced some sweet touches to combine well with striker Victor Obinna.

Sergio Aguero, whose two goals destroyed Brazil in Tuesday's 3-0 semifinal win, was put through by Di Maria but Apam saw off the threat in the 16th minute.

Messi appealed for a penalty when he surged into the area but it was turned down and at the other end left-winger Peter Odemwingie's header was just over the bar.

The baking heat forced Hungarian referee Viktor Kassai to stop play for a water break on the half-hour and on the resumption Odemwingie skipped around Nicolas Pareja and skipper Promise Isaac just missed connecting with the cross.

The ball came back and Isaac's header was saved by Sergio Romero in Nigeria's best chance of the half.

Argentina didn't get their first corner until the 39th minute and just before halftime Apam again defused another Messi threat and Di Maria let fly with a fierce long-range drive which just whistled past the right post.

Messi almost scored minutes after the interval flicking the ball around a defender and unleashing a stinging volley that was taken by Vanzekin.

Apam went into the referee's book for a heavy tackle on Di Maria as Argentina began to take more control of the game.

Messi had a chance moments later skipping clear after winning the ball in a tackle but Apam saved the situation with a great covering tackle on the edge of the box.



THE MESSIAH: Sublime Argentine forward Lionel Messi (L) leaps to control the ball during his side's Beijing 2008 Olympic Games men's football final against Nigeria at the Bird's Nest yesterday. Messi set up the all-important goal for Angel di Maria for Argentina's second successive Olympic gold.

## Tigers beaten easily

Cricket

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Darwin

The third warm-up match again showed how good a batting track the Gardens Oval has as the Australian Institute of Sports (AIS) chased Bangladesh's 270 with 11 balls and five wickets to spare here yesterday.

The morning, unlike the past few days, was breezy and a tad cloudy. Whatever encouragement the bowlers have on this pitch is usually limited to the first five or six overs and AIS skipper Moises Henriques had no hesitation in putting Bangladesh in on winning the toss.

The Tigers had left out Mehrab Hossain, Shahadat Hossain and Dollar Mahmud from this game and Zunaed Siddiqui opened with Tamim Iqbal. Tamim was the first to go caught behind after going hard at a ball out side off and Zunaed got a leading edge when he tried to flick a full toss and was caught at cover.

Bangladesh were 2/5 inside four overs before Alok Kapali (38), Shakib Al Hasan (67) and Rokibul Hassan (51 not out) ensured a decent total.

The batsmen again all looked good as long as they were at the crease but momentary loss in concentration and some injudicious shot-selection brought about the downfall of captain Mohammad Ashraful (21), Kapali and Shakib. Ashraful skied an attempted pull, Alok went for a wild swing and Shakib, who orchestrated the

Bangladesh recovery with a 99-run partnership for the 5th wicket Rokibul danced out against spin and was stumped.

Shakib had swept, cut and used his feet impeccably until his dis-

missal. Bangladesh shuffled the batting line in a bid to give the top-order batters more time in the middle. Kapali had gone in at four while

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Bangladesh batsman Rokibul Hassan, who was unbeaten on 51, drives through cover during the third practice match against the Australian Institute of Sports at the Gardens Oval in Darwin yesterday.

## F'ganj's double delight

CITYCELL FEDERATION CUP '08

SPORTS REPORTER

Farashganj Sporting Club had two reasons to celebrate yesterday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. First, it was their clinical 2-0 victory over Muktiyoddha Sangsad Krira Chakra in their last Group A match and second, and most importantly, the win helped them avoid giants Mohammedan Sporting Club in the upcoming quarterfinals.

They will face Arambagh Krira Sangha while Muktiyoddha will take on the might of the Black & Whites in the last eight. That remained uncertain before the game started at 6:00pm but the result of the day's first game, Khulna Abahani's 1-0 win over Dhaka Wanderers at the Gazipur Stadium, made sure the two teams fighting it out at the Big Bowl would make it to the quarterfinals.

Farashganj kept possession but Muktiyoddha had a golden chance to equalise in the 28th minute when Kanchan failed to connect with an open net gaping in front of

him. Four minutes later, Enamul Haque was presented with a gilt-edged opportunity when the Muktiyoddha goalie's clearance fell on his feet. He dodged past Rajib but his shot slammed into the bar.

No more chances came for either sides in the first-half but after the break, Enamul made it 2-0 with his brilliant goal in the 83rd minute after he beat both Henry and Nizam to find the net with a superb shot.

And it was never Muktiyoddha's day as substitute Walid hit the crossbar after coming on in place of Kanchan in the final minute.

Out in Gazipur, it was Tariqul Islam's 57th minute strike that put Khulna Abahani's solitary goal victory.

In the previous Group A matches, Farashganj outplayed Khulna Abahani 3-0 and Dhaka Wanderers Club 1-0 while Muktiyoddha beat the Khulna side 1-0 and played out a one-all draw with Wanderers.

In today's Group C matches,

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## Noble Bolt

CHINA DAILY, Beijing

Triple Olympic sprint gold medalist Jamaican Usain Bolt on Saturday made a personal donation of 50,000 dollars to children in the earthquake-stricken Sichuan Province, and wished people there to "get through from the tragedy" and move forward with the inspiration of the Olympic Games.

"We came here, tried to perform well," said the Jamaican, who claimed the gold medals in men's 100m and 200m sprint as well as the 4x100m relay at the Beijing Olympic Games. "I hope people enjoy the games, forget the past and move on."

"You have to move forward after the disaster. And also, the Olympics ask people to move forward," he added.

An 8.0-magnitude tremor hit the south-western Chinese province and its neighbouring regions on May 12, killing nearly 70,000 people and leaving some 18,000 others missing. At least 10 million people lost their homes to the disaster.

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## Relay redemption for US

AP, Beijing



Sanya Richards needed a furious comeback Jeremy Wariner could have walked to the finish.

The results were the same, though.

No dropped batons. And gold medals. Finally. In a pair of races that helped salvage the U.S. track and field team's Olympics, Wariner, Richards and Allyson Felix led an American sweep of the 1,600-meter relays Saturday, an event that might as well have been designed to bolster the U.S. team's gold-medal count.

Richards anchored her team to a come-from-behind victory in 3 minutes, 18.54 seconds, the world's fastest time since 1993. It was the fourth straight Olympic win for the United States in the women's 1,600.

Wariner crossed the line 12 strides ahead of Christopher Brown of the Bahamas, finishing in 2:55.39 to break the Olympic record

by 0.35 second.

"To end it with an Olympic record after everything those guys have been through, that shows you they care about representing America," U.S. men's coach Bubba Thornton said. "They wanted to end it with a good dose of good ol' American apple pie."

The women's race was hardly a breeze -- unless you count that huge sigh of relief that came from the U.S. foursome.

In the final leg, Richards trailed Russia's Anastasia Kapachinskaya for more than 300 meters, with no signs of closing the gap. But down the stretch, Richards finally took over -- something she couldn't do in her bronze-medal performance in the 400-meter race on Tuesday -- for the 0.28-second victory.

When she crossed the line, she threw out her right fist -- baton tightly clenched inside of it, knowing a gold medal would soon be hung around her neck. The team huddled and cried. Tears of joy this time instead of disappointment.

"You get down on yourself," Richards said. "So we used that as motivation. We kept our heads high and we ran great."

There was no such drama in the men's race, which featured two gold-medal winners -- LaShawn Merritt, who upset Wariner in the 400, and Angelo Taylor, the 400 hurdles winner. Merritt put America in the lead early, Taylor widened the gap. David Neville held it and Wariner romped to the finish.

The American men won the long relay at the Olympics for the 18th time out of 22 they've been entered. Their gold medal in 2000 was recently stripped because of a doping case.

With only Sunday's marathon left, the Americans are likely to finish with seven gold medals, one fewer than the last two Olympics, but one more than their worst showings in 1972 and 1976, when fewer events were held.

The golds gave the Americans 23 overall medals, meaning they're virtually assured of falling short of the 25 they won in Athens four years ago.

Wariner, Felix and Richards were among a big handful of Americans who came to Beijing with gold-medal hopes that were unfulfilled coming into the final weekend.

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## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Metropolis Women's School football tournament will begin in the third week of October.

Ahead of the meet, the BFF women's football committee chairman Sirajul Islam exchanged views with the sports teachers of different Bengali and English medium schools at the BFF Bhaban yesterday afternoon.

Deputy chairperson of BFF women's football committee Mahfuza Akhter was also present.

## PREMIER HANDBALL

Surjadyo Krira Chakra drubbed Bharratita Samaj Kalyan Sangha 26-12 in the 14th Cute Premier Division Handball League at the Outer Stadium Handball ground.

Nishan scored six goals for the winners, while Anik netted four goals for the losers. Nishan was later adjudged man-of-the-match.

In another match, Old Ideals edged past Menzis Krira Chakra 22-21 after leading the first half 14-13. Mamun scored seven goals for Old Ideals, while Russell netted eight goals for Menzis.

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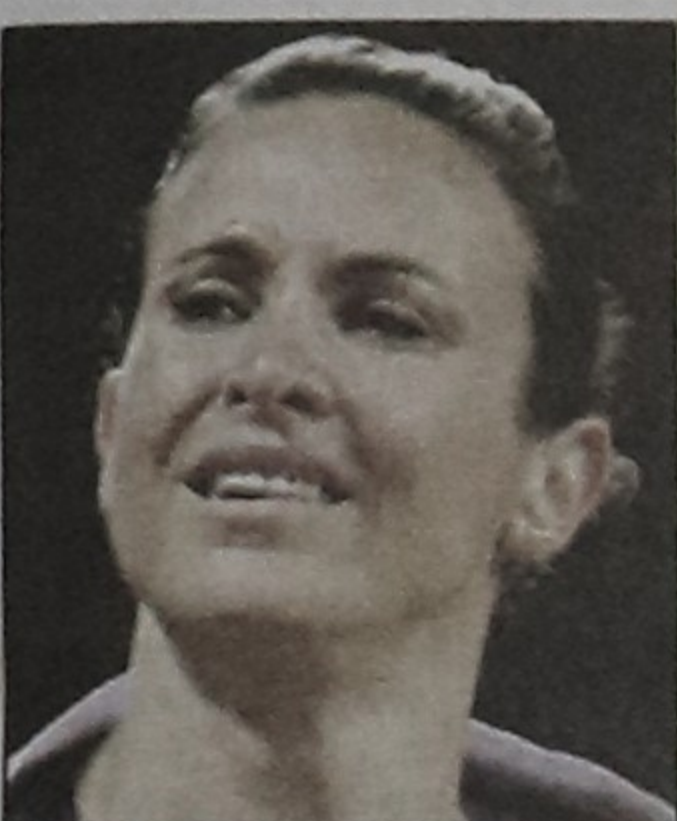
Kabir Hossain, captain of Farashganj Sporting Club, jumps to celebrate his lucky goal against Muktiyoddha Sangsad Krira Chakra during their Citycell Federation Cup Group A match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



## Did U Know?

Brazil were one of the favourites to win the football gold medal in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. Ironically, Brazil -- who won five FIFA World Cups (1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002) -- have never won an Olympic title. This time they also failed to enter the final itself.



## Maurren Higa Maggi

(Star Brazilian athlete)  
"It really means a whole lot to me after the ban, and to achieve something as huge as this for me and my country really is mind numbing." After giving Brazil its first women's athletics gold in Olympic history at the Beijing Games as she served a two-year drug ban in 2003.



## BTB

Beijing Olympic Games  
Rhythmic (Women's) Gymnastics  
Live from 9:00am  
Men's Volleyball Final  
Live from 10:00am  
Men's Basketball Final  
Live from 12:30pm  
Men's Handball Final  
Live from 1:45pm  
Closing Ceremony  
Live from 6:00pm

## TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v India  
Third ODI  
Live from 3:00pm

## ESPN

English Premier League  
Wigan v Chelsea  
Live from 6:30pm  
Man City v West Ham  
Live from 8:55pm

## Academy's last game today

SPORTS REPORTER

GP-BCB National Cricket Academy take on South Africa Academy in their third and final one-day match at Lenasia in Johannesburg today.

The touring side are already down 2-0 in the three-match one-day series after losing the second one-dayer by 27 runs at Tukkies in Pretoria on Friday. The Academy also suffered a 19-run loss at Dobsonville in Johannesburg in the first one-day match.

Earlier, in the two three-day matches, the GP-BCB Academy team registered an exciting three-run win over their South African counterparts in the first match at Tukkies in Pretoria.

But they suffered an innings and 63-run defeat in the second match at Laudiam.

## Ashraf given PCB farewell

CRICINFO, undated

Nasim Ashraf, the former chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), was given a warm send-off by his colleagues after he visited the board headquarters in Lahore on Friday for a farewell meeting.

Sohail Mansoor, the board's spokesman, said it was a "warm and sentimental affair".

Ashraf, who resigned from the PCB after 20 months in charge, spoke about his tenure.

"I have a genuine love for cricket and tried my best to take Pakistan cricket where it truly belongs," he told the News.