



PHOTO: AFP

Kenya's David Lekuta Rudisha (R) runs ahead of Sudan's Abubaker Kaki (C) and Ethiopia's Mohammed Aman (L) on way to winning the men's 800m final at the Olympic Stadium in London on Thursday.

Running his father's dream

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM from London

It's easy to lose the spotlight to someone like Usain Bolt. But on Thursday night, a 23-year-old Kenyan Maasai ensured that his name would resonate through the history of middle-distance running and be spoken of in educated quarters in the same breath as that of the more illustrious Bolt.

The story of David Rudisha's rise from a soft-spoken Kenyan schoolboy disinterested in sport to perhaps the greatest middle distance runner in the world currently was completed in the hard racetracks of London's Olympic Stadium.

Rudisha not only won gold in an event he has almost made his own, but he did so by crushing his own world record with an inspired run that will possibly be included amongst some of the most profound Olympic moments of all time. That is because, on Thursday, London was perhaps witness to the greatest 800-metre race ever run in recorded Olympic history.

Because it is not just that Rudisha set a record pace. It is that he absolutely had to, because behind him, every single runner seemingly ran the race of his life. Two runners set national records, four

others set their personal bests and another ran a season best. And if that was not enough, every single man ran the fastest ever time for their placing in history. Rudisha's metronomic brilliance though, was a tad too much for anyone else.

The race was so good, that it was barely believable. Rudisha himself thought so.

"I could hardly believe it," he said at the press conference later.

Neither could those watching as the 800-metre that unfolded before their eyes became less a run and more a sprint. It seemed the athletes had put all reservations at the door and decided all and sundry to just go for it. Suffice to say it was thrilling.

Rudisha ran the 500 metres in 61, the 600 in a minute and fourteen seconds and with 200 to go, in his own words he 'decided to push it.'

And push it he did, motoring onto world record pace. With this run, Rudisha now owns six of the event's top eight times, and he said he was surprised he broke the world record after two rounds of qualifying. "I think I got a little bit tired," he said. "I could feel it in my legs."

Coming into London 2012, Rudisha was just about as close to a sure thing to a gold medal as any track and field athlete

could get. Yet, the deed still has to be done and the 23-year completed it with aplomb, bringing full circle a family history that stretches back to the 1968 Olympics, where his father won silver in the relay. "I was thinking of my father at home watching this race. He was not able to come here and watch it. He is always part of me, he is the one who has made me come this far. It's been a big inspiration in my career."

"He won silver in 1968 and I have been dreaming of bettering that by winning the gold medal. I saw in a magazine from the 1960s he wanted to break the world record but he couldn't do it. I have fulfilled that ambition he couldn't."

In the past, world 800-metre record-holders have struggled to live up to their storied reputations at the Olympic Games. Sebastian Coe missed out on gold in both 1980 and 1984; Wilson Kipketer did the same some two decades later.

But in 2010 Rudisha broke the 13-year-old world 800-metre record twice in one week. Then, in 2011, he won his first global title at the World Athletics Championships in Daegu. In the Olympic Park in London on Thursday, he won the Olympic gold missing from his locker. On Thursday, the 23-year-old Kenyan achieved sporting immortality.

Yuvi picked for World T20

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India on Friday selected cancer survivor Yuvraj Singh for the World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka, four months after he was treated for a rare form of lung cancer.

The 30-year-old left-hander, one of the most flamboyant batsmen in world cricket, was named in a 15-man squad for the 12-nation tournament which begins next month.

Yuvraj, who completed chemotherapy in the United States in April to treat a germ-cell tumour between his lungs, has not played competitive cricket since two home Tests against the West Indies last November.

He only recently began light training at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore.

"It is good to see Yuvraj back. He is fit and has fought his way back," chairman of selectors Krishnamachari Srikkanth told reporters in Mumbai.

"He has been one of the most important members of the Indian team. With this combination, we have a great chance to win the World Twenty20."

Yuvraj played a key role in India's 50-over World Cup triumph last year, scoring 362 runs and taking 15 wickets in nine matches to be named man of the tournament.

He rose to fame when he smashed England's fast bowler Stuart Broad for six sixes in one over during the inaugural World Twenty20 in South

Africa in 2007, which India went on to win.

India failed to reach the semi-finals in the next two editions in 2009 in England and 2010 in the West Indies.

The squad, announced in a media release by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, also includes seasoned off-spinner Harbhajan Singh and seamer Lakshmiopathy Balaji.

Harbhajan, 32, a veteran of 98 Tests, 229 one-dayers and 23 Twenty20 internationals, makes a comeback after being ignored since August last year.

Balaji, who last played for India in 2009, returns to the national squad after an impressive run in domestic cricket and the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition.

India have been drawn with defending champions England and Afghanistan in the preliminary group A, from which two teams will advance to the Super Eight round.

The squad will prepare for the tournament with two Twenty20 matches against New Zealand in Visakhapatnam on September 8 and Chennai on September 11. The World Twenty20 runs from September 18 to October 7.

SQUAD
Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Yuvraj Singh, Irfan Pathan, Ravichandran Ashwin, Zaheer Khan, Lakshmiopathy Balaji, Ashok Dinda, Rohit Sharma, Piyush Chawla, Harbhajan Singh, Manoj Tiwary.



YUVRAJ SINGH

Eaton's

FROM PAGE 16 insisted that the accolade of world's best athlete belonged to his US teammate Eaton.

"So Ashton doesn't have to sound selfish or self-centred, Ashton is the best athlete that has ever walked the planet, hands down," Hardee said, interrupting a question to Eaton.

"The title bestowed upon the Olympic champion in decathlon is the world's greatest athlete and Ashton's the world record holder in that event, the same reason Usain Bolt can be the fastest man on the planet because that's the title that's bestowed upon those event winners."

"Just because you're fast doesn't make you an athlete," said Hardee.

"Ashton was the world's fastest decathlete for a number of years but he became a real decathlete and that's what you've seen this year."

A blushing Eaton responded: "Thanks, Trey!"

"There's no fight," Eaton continued. "Usain is clearly awesome in his own right and is an icon of the sport."

"I think titles are for, I don't know, books and stuff. I just like doing what

U-19s start

FROM PAGE 16 Super League stage and the two bottom-placed sides from each group will compete in the Plate Championship. The Plate final will be staged on August 24 in Brisbane while the Super League final will take place at the Tony Ireland Stadium on August 26.

Bangladesh's second group match against South Africa will be held tomorrow and the third and final group encounter against Namibia will take place on August 16.

A triopoly in hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

In the last 22 years, hockey powerhouse Abahani, Mohammedan and Usha KC have literally turned the league title into their own property, sharing all the 14 titles (held in that time). There was no exception this time around either as one of the big three (Mohammedan) scooped up the prize, with a startling unbeaten record.

These three clubs have altogether struck a staggering 209 goals out of the 350 scored in the 55 first-leg matches in the recently-concluded premier league with Usha posting the league's biggest margin of victory (17-0) over Wari Club.

Things were not similar in the past though as lightweights like Azad Sporting Club, Ajax Sporting Club and Sadharan Bima had often sprung surprises by beating the big boys. But the gulf has widened so much these days, that those upsets are only part of history today.

So what is the secret behind this ever-increasing gap between the big boys and the minnows or the mid-table sides? It is certainly not due to any drastic improvement in the quality of these three clubs, as

was found out by consulting with former and current players, club and federation officials. Rather they put it to the falling quality of the players of these lower clubs, their financial limitations, lack of practice facilities and an overall lack of enthusiasm in the sport in general.

"There are hardly 20 to 25 quality players in the country and all of them are scooped up by Usha, Mohammedan or Abahani and the others are left to form squad with mediocre players" opined former national striker Rafikul Islam Kamal.

Kamal, also manager of Usha KC, also feels that the dwindling interest in hockey among the new generation also leads to the decline in quality.

Azad SC's hockey secretary Mohammad Yousuf Ali, however, feels differently about the whole thing. According to Yousuf, the increased number of goals in matches is a direct result of the annulment of off-side rule in 1993. However he also feels that irregular staging of tournaments at the national and district level is also a cause of the downfall.

According to BHF records, since the start of the First Division Hockey, which

later turned into Premier Division in 1998, a total of 28 leagues were held in 38 years and the hockey's governing body could hold only nine premier division leagues in last 14 years.

Once a lot of players used to come to the capital to play the Dhaka league but now eighty percent of the total premier league players are product of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan where country's second astro-turf is installed.

"We don't have many quality defenders, so the minnows can't defend their territory well against the big teams," Ajax SC secretary Kazi Moinuzzaman Pila said.

Jafrul Hsan, an official of first division club Barnak Samaj, informed that the budding hockey players in Mirpur had earlier waited their turn when the first batch of players had practice but the scenario is now totally different.

"After having practiced in Mirpur three to four days a week, we used to take the boys to the hockey stadium to have practice at the turf but the parents of those players now don't allow them because it consumes a huge amount of time for the traffic jam in Dhaka," said Hsan.

LONDONdiary

10 August, 2012

SPORTS REPORTER from London

Somewhere out there Geoffrey Boycott is smiling. Were it an independent country, Yorkshire would be in the top 10 of the Olympic medal table, with six golds won by five athletes born within its boundaries, and tourism chiefs have produced a map to celebrate.

The guide pinpoints all 43 of the county's Olympic athletes, including heptathlete Jessica Ennis, triathlon's Brownlee brothers, double track cycling gold medallist Ed Clancy and Olympic champion rowers Andy Triggs Hodge and Katherine Copeland.

Alistair and Jonathan Brownlee, who won gold and bronze respectively in Hyde Park on Tuesday, regularly opt to train near their home in Leeds rather than travelling to warmer climes overseas.

Of course, if the Brownlee family were an independent nation they would be on a par with Lithuania.

The Join In UK website has mapped success by county around the UK, pointing out that Hampshire is closest to Yorkshire's count, with five Olympic champions.

Yorkshire is also bidding against Barcelona, Venice, Berlin and Scotland to host the first two stages of the 2016 Tour de France with sprint cyclist Mark Cavendish, whose mother comes from the county, an enthusiastic supporter.

Gymnastic royalty

America's new sweetheart, 16-year-old gold medallist gymnast Gabby Douglas, has been swapping style tips with royalty.

"I met Kate, the duchess, that was a cool experience for me. She loved our leos [leotards]," she told a news conference on Thursday.

"I love London. We toured around and went on the London Eye and saw the Buckingham Palace and visited all the cool marks of London," she enthused, also commenting favourably on the food, security and bed linen at the athletes' village.

Asked about her newfound stardom and her role as the first African American to reach such a high level in the sport she said: "I think more coloured people are going to start coming into the gymnastics and say 'anything is possible, if Gabby did it I can do it'."

"I've always wanted to inspire people, and the thing about the Olympics, this quote 'inspire a generation' - so, you know, I can check that off my bucket list."

Wheel of love

As if winning four gold medals at London 2012 was not enough, British cyclists Laura Trott andrott took to Twitter to announce the joyous news. She tweeted, "So yes it's out there me and @JasonKenny107 are dating. Been a little while now just didn't want the distraction before the games."

If the lovestruck pair had really wished to keep their new-found happiness to themselves, you might think that kissing at Horse Guards Parade during the women's beach volleyball final was not the best policy. Especially if you happened to be sitting directly behind David Beckham and his sons at the time.

BMX riders take a crash course

Worried that your children might go the way of those daredevil BMX riders -- who found so many painful and spectacular ways to crash on the opening day of competition -- when the course opens to the public after the Games? Well, here are two pieces of reassuring news. First, the VeloPark track is going to be remodelled to cater for riders of all

Decathlon gold for Eaton

AFP, London



Ashton Eaton of the United States produced a totally dominant performance over two gruelling days to claim the Olympic decathlon gold medal on Thursday.

The world record holder amassed 8,869 points in the 10-discipline event, to finish 198pts ahead of teammate and world champion Trey Hardee (8,671), with Cuba's Leonel Suarez claiming bronze (8,523).

Eaton's total was the second best in Olympic history behind the 8,893pts notched up by Roman Sebrle in 2004. The Czech veteran was an early casualty here, dropping out after the very first event through injury.

"I worked really hard for this, I just can't believe it," said Eaton. "When I think about all the work I've put in, all the guys have put in a lot of work."

"I wonder why I deserved the gold because all these other guys worked so hard as well. It's like a family out there, all wanting to succeed."

But Eaton then revealed a hard-nosed streak needed to succeed at the top table of professional sports.

"I knew going into that race I was going to get the gold. I just thought 'what's going on?'. This is my dream but it's happened so fast," said Eaton.

The Oregon-based Eaton built his lead on Wednesday's first day of action, setting lead scores in the 100m (10.35sec), long jump (8.03m) and 400m (46.90sec), with a second-ranked high jump performance (2.05m) making up for a rather poorer 14.66m in the shot put.

The 24-year-old had bagged a total of 7,381 pts after the first three events of the second day's action at the packed Olympic Stadium.

He was beaten by two-hundredths of a second to the leading time in the 110m hurdles by Hardee, who clocked a very respectable 13.54sec.

Hardee maintained the pressure with a best of 48.26m in the discus, which netted him 834pts. Eaton, however, could manage only 42.53m for 716pts.

In the pole vault, Eaton cleared 5.20 metres, with Hardee going over at 4.80m, leaving Eaton with a decisive 222-point lead with just the javelin and 1,500m remaining in the evening session.



PHOTO: AFP

US decathlete Ashton Eaton runs a celebratory lap with his country's flag after winning the men's decathlon at the Olympic Stadium in London on Thursday.

Laxman gets Test call

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Veteran Venkatsai Laxman was given a chance to extend his international career after being named Friday in India's squad for two home Tests against New Zealand.

The stylish middle-order batsman, 37, had been under pressure to retain his place after a dismal performance in India's last Test series in Australia early this year.

Laxman managed just 155 runs with one half-century in eight innings in the series, averaging 19.37 which was much below his overall average of 45.97 in 134 matches.

He has so far scored 8,781 Test runs with 17 centuries.

The national selectors opted for experience at the start of a new home season which will also feature four Tests each against England and Australia.

The series against New Zealand will be India's first since the retirement of accomplished top-order batsman Rahul Dravid earlier this year.

Cheteshwar Pujara, a 24-year-old batsman who played the last of his three Tests in January 2011, returned to the squad and is likely to bat

in the top order.

Fast bowler Ishant Sharma, leg-spinner Piyush Chawla and left-hand batsman Suresh Raina also made comebacks in the 15-man squad.

Sharma missed the Asia Cup in Bangladesh in March and the tour of Sri Lanka this month due to an ankle injury.

Chawla featured in two Tests between 2006 and 2008, while Raina was dropped after the fourth and final Test against England at the Oval in August 2011.

Chawla will be the third spinner in the squad after Ravichandran Ashwin and Pragyan Ojha.

Sachin Tendulkar, the world's leading scorer in both Test and one-day cricket, returned after opting out of the recent one-day series in Sri Lanka.

The Tests will be played in Hyderabad (Aug 23-27) and Bangalore (Aug 31-Sept 4), followed by two Twenty20 internationals in Visakhapatnam (Sep 8) and Chennai (Sept 11).

SQUAD

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatsai Laxman, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Ravichandran Ashwin, Zaheer Khan, Pragyan Ojha, Umesh Yadav, Ajinkya Rahane, Piyush Chawla, Ishant Sharma, Suresh Raina.

MEDALLIST

FROM PAGE 16			
Czech Republic	2	3	3
Colombia	1	3	4
Kenya	2	2	3
Sweden	1	3	3
Azerbaijan	0	2	4
North Korea	4	0	1
South Africa	3	1	1
Mexico	0	3	2
Croatia	2	1	1
Ethiopia	2	0	2
Slovenia	1	1	2
India	0	1	3
Mongolia	0	1	3
Slovakia	0	1	3
Switzerland	2	1	0
Georgia	1	1	1
Norway	1	1	1
Tunisia	1	1	1
Ireland	1	0	2
Armenia	0	1	2
Belgium	0	1	2
Dominican Republic	1	1	0
Latvia	1	0	1
Lithuania	1	0	1
Turkey	1	0	1
Egypt	0	2	0
Bulgaria	0	1	1

(The medal list was updated at 10:00pm Bangladesh time)

Bolt's burst into immortality

FROM PAGE 16

pulls before the race or the Queen Elizabeth wave he so specifically tailored for this auspicious occasion. With Bolt there is the feeling of watching a sportsman compete in pure, unadulterated freedom, a facet long since lost to the dreary professionalism of modern sport. On Thursday, before the race, Bolt spoke to a female volunteer who looked particularly wired.

"Are you nervous?" asked Bolt. She nodded. "Why?" asked the man who was just minutes from taking part in the race that would seal his legacy. "Because I am so excited," said the volunteer.

But Bolt was neither nervous nor excited. For him, this was just another race at the Jamaica Track Club with his mates Blake and

Warren Weir. The 80,000 buying crowd were not fear, but rather motivation. And so it proved as the three finished 1-2-3 to make Jamaica only the second nation ever to complete a track and field clean sweep.

After the race, Bolt narrated the story of how he had told Blake in 2010 that the young man had just come at the wrong time.

"I told him, Yohan, you have come at the wrong time, because the next two years, the next two years is my time."

It certainly has been.

On his twitter profile, Bolt calls himself, 'the most naturally gifted athlete the world has ever seen.' After his exploits on Thursday night, you will be hard-pressed to find anyone in the world who would ever disagree.