

Star SPORT

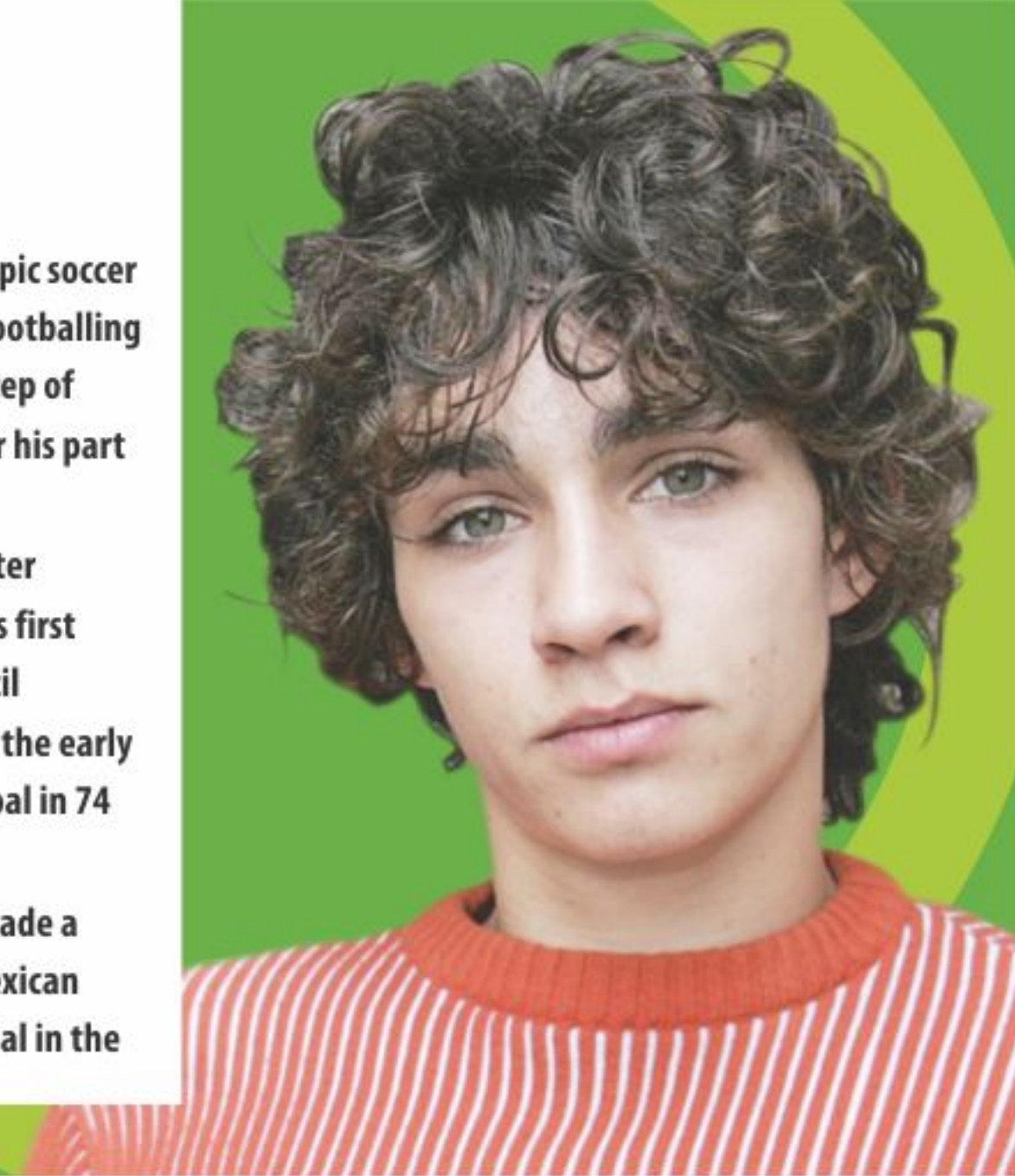
DHAKA TUESDAY AUGUST 14, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Blame it on Rafael

A day after Brazil lost the Olympic soccer final to Mexico, the country's footballing authorities took the unusual step of singling out full back Rafael for his part in the defeat.

A loose pass from the Manchester United defender led to Mexico's first goal after just 29 seconds. Brazil struggled to bounce back from the early blow and conceded a second goal in 74 minutes.

"Right back Rafael knows he made a mistake that led to the first Mexican goal in the Olympic football final in the



Fireworks light up the night sky -- much as the Games has lit up London and the wider world over the last fortnight -- above the Olympic Stadium during the glittering closing ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

End of a supreme carnival

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM from London

At the end of a long, raucous night, it was inevitably the words of Lord Sebastian Coe that best summed up the last sixteen days of whirlwind madness in London.

"When our time came, we did it right," said Coe in his short and sweet speech towards the end of the Closing Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium, and it had the capacity crowd at the stadium clapping in agreement.

And London did it right. Pre-Games jitters about transport, budget et al where brushed aside emphatically by the performances of a galaxy of stars including Michael Phelps, Usain Bolt, Jessica Ennis, Mohammad Farah, David Rudisha and Sir Chris Hoy.

There were intricate storylines, from

Michael Phelps defending his juggernaut reputation to Usain Bolt ascending the pantheon of legends. But there was also a blind archer who broke a world record and a man without legs who made it to the finals of a 400-metre relay.

And then, there was also the collective euphoria that carried Team Great Britain or Team GB as they were known to exalted heights. At the 2004 Athens Games, Great Britain combined for just nine gold medals and 30 overall. This was not a sporting powerhouse. When the nation was granted these Olympics, the government invested in infrastructure and training, and suddenly there were times it felt like no other nation stood a chance. The United States and China still finished first and second in the medal standings but "Team GB," as it was hailed, finished third with 29 gold medals and 65 overall.

For once, the British had their own heroes, and they delivered. Jessica Ennis won the heptathlon, Mohammad Farah sent the stadium into raptures and in the futuristic Velodrome, Victoria Pendleton and Chris Hoy shot them to new heights.

London, then, had much to celebrate of their own.

But even if they lacked characters of their own, they could certainly adopt many. Michael Phelps came into London with his reputation on the wane. In his swansong, the legendary swimmer proved true the oldest rule in the book: never count out a champion. He left London as the most decorated Olympian of this Games and also the most decorated Olympian of all time.

But if we are to celebrate London, then we need to turn our attentions to the one man who transformed what might have been just a good

Games to what became a phenomenal one.

Sport needs characters, and in Usain Bolt, track and field has found its Muhammad Ali. Bolt is currently the most thrilling athlete in the world, and you can feel it in the electric pulse that resonates across the stadium whenever the crowd catch a glimpse of him. Bolt performed for less than two minutes in London, but those are two minutes that will be seared in the memory of all those lucky enough to have been there. He also took home three gold medals and regaled all with panache and character. Bolt really was the fulcrum of the Olympics.

But London 2012 would also not have been what it was without the help of the 70,000 volunteers who stood day and night outside underground stations, at malls, at bus stops and inside the stadium to help out

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Ideal, fitting denouement

AFP, London



The London Olympics closed in a blaze of music and colour Sunday after a two-week sporting festival that electrified the host nation and was watched by billions around the world.

Olympics President Jacques Rogge praised the Games as "happy and glorious" before the sporting spectacular was brought to a close in a three-hour ceremony rounded out with a performance from British rock band The Who.

"Through your commitment to fair play, your respect for opponents, and your grace in defeat as well as in victory, you have earned the right to be called Olympians," Rogge said. "These were happy and glorious Games."

The Spice Girls, George Michael, Brazilian football legend Pele and a cast of more than 4,000 entertained a packed crowd of 80,000 at Olympic Stadium, the focal point of a Games which has borne witness to an extraordinary fortnight.

The ceremony also saw the handover of the Olympic flag to the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, a symbolic transfer which launches the four-year countdown to the 2016 Games to be held in the Brazilian city.

Record-breaking sprinter Usain Bolt and swimmer Michael Phelps lit up Olympic Park, a former industrial site, and Jessica Ennis led an unexpectedly high number of British champions who kept fans' excitement at fever-pitch.

The United States topped the medals table with 46 golds, eight ahead of China, while Britain had 29 -- their best since 1904. It was the first Games where every team had at least one female athlete.

"Today was the closing of a wonderful Games in a wonderful city. We lit the flame and we lit up the world," said Games chief Sebastian Coe.

Prime Minister David Cameron received congratulations from US President Barack Obama, who called him to praise the organisation and the performance of the British team.

"We reminded ourselves what we can do and, yes, we demonstrated that you should never ever count Team GB down and out," Cameron said earlier.

Cameron said the Games had reflected the best of Britain's multicultural make-up, taking the example of Mo

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Saqlain arrives today to aid spinners

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Pakistan off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq will arrive today to join the Tigers as the spin bowling specialist.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) appointed Saqlain as the national team's spin bowling coach on July 11 for a short stint, which will be considered as a probation period for the Pakistani.

As per contract Saqlain will work with the Tigers till the home series against West Indies in November-December.

Under the guidance of head coach Richard Pybus, the Tigers are now training for the upcoming T20 tournament in Trinidad & Tobago where they are scheduled to play a tournament under the banner of BCB XI. After the completion of the competition Mushfiqur Rahim's men will go to Sri Lanka directly to take part in the ICC World Twenty20 starting from September 18.

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British celebrity, wife of football star David Beckham and erstwhile Spice Girl Victoria 'Posh' Beckham performs as part of the popular all-girl pop group during the closing ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in London Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

ICC AWARDS

Shakib, Nasir and Sunny nominated

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has been nominated in the long-list of the ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the year for the ICC Awards, which takes place on 15 September in Colombo. The 9th annual LG ICC Awards took into account the players' performances over the period between August 4 2011 and August 6 2012. Throughout this period Shakib was prolific with both bat and ball, scoring 590 runs at an average of 49.16 and taking 22 wickets at 25.50.

Alongside Shakib, young up-and-comer Nasir Hossain has been nominated in the long-list of the ICC Emerging Cricketer of the year. To qualify for that award a player must be under the age of 26 and have played fewer than five Tests and/or 10 ODIs and five T20Is at the start of the voting period. Nasir has made a solid start to his ODI

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