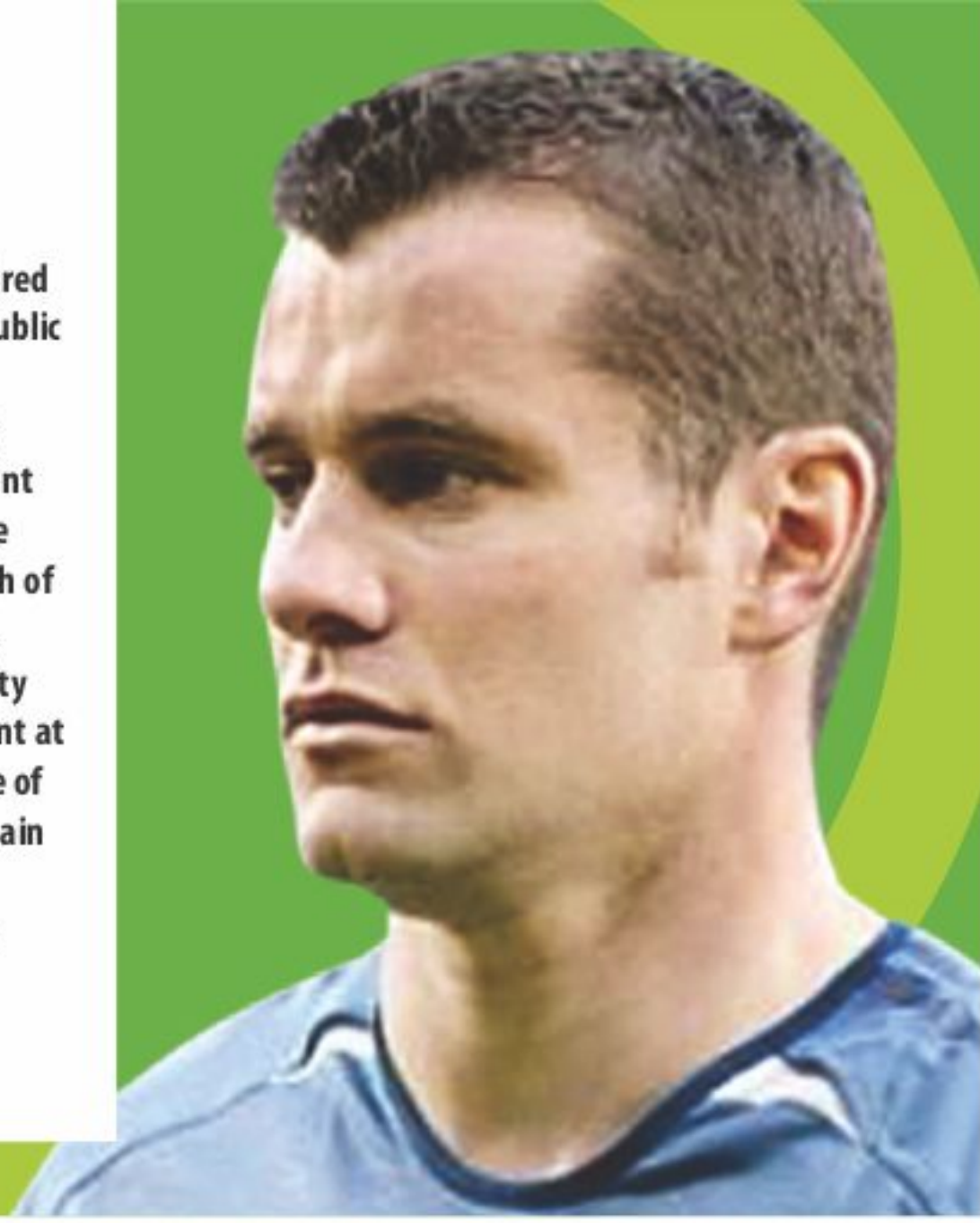


Star SPORT

DHAKA WEDNESDAY AUGUST 15, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Given quits Ireland

Aston Villa goalkeeper Shay Given retired from international duty with the Republic of Ireland on Monday. Given made his Ireland debut against Russia in 1996 and went on to represent the Republic a record 125 times before hanging up his gloves in the aftermath of a disappointing Euro 2012 campaign. The 36-year-old former Manchester City and Newcastle star was an ever-present at the Euros as the Republic lost all three of their group games against Croatia, Spain and Italy. But Given was omitted from Giovanni Trapattoni's squad for Wednesday's friendly against Serbia as the Ireland



Women cricketers go to Ireland

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team will leave Dhaka tonight for Ireland to participate in a tri-nation ODI and T20I series featuring the hosts and Pakistan from August 20-29 in Dublin.

Captain Salma Khatun had high hopes of the tour as she said that the trip creates a chance for them to show their improvement on the international stage even though they will face two tough opponents in the series.

"I think our team is now in better shape and we are looking forward to play good cricket on the tour so we can prove our improvement in international cricket," said Salma Khatun yesterday.

"It will be a fantastic experience for our cricketers to play in different conditions. We know Ireland will be tough opponents in their own conditions, as will Pakistan, but we are confident about securing good results," she added.

Salma also rated their new coach Oshadee Werrasinghe highly. The former Sri Lankan

2300 registered for Pioneer League

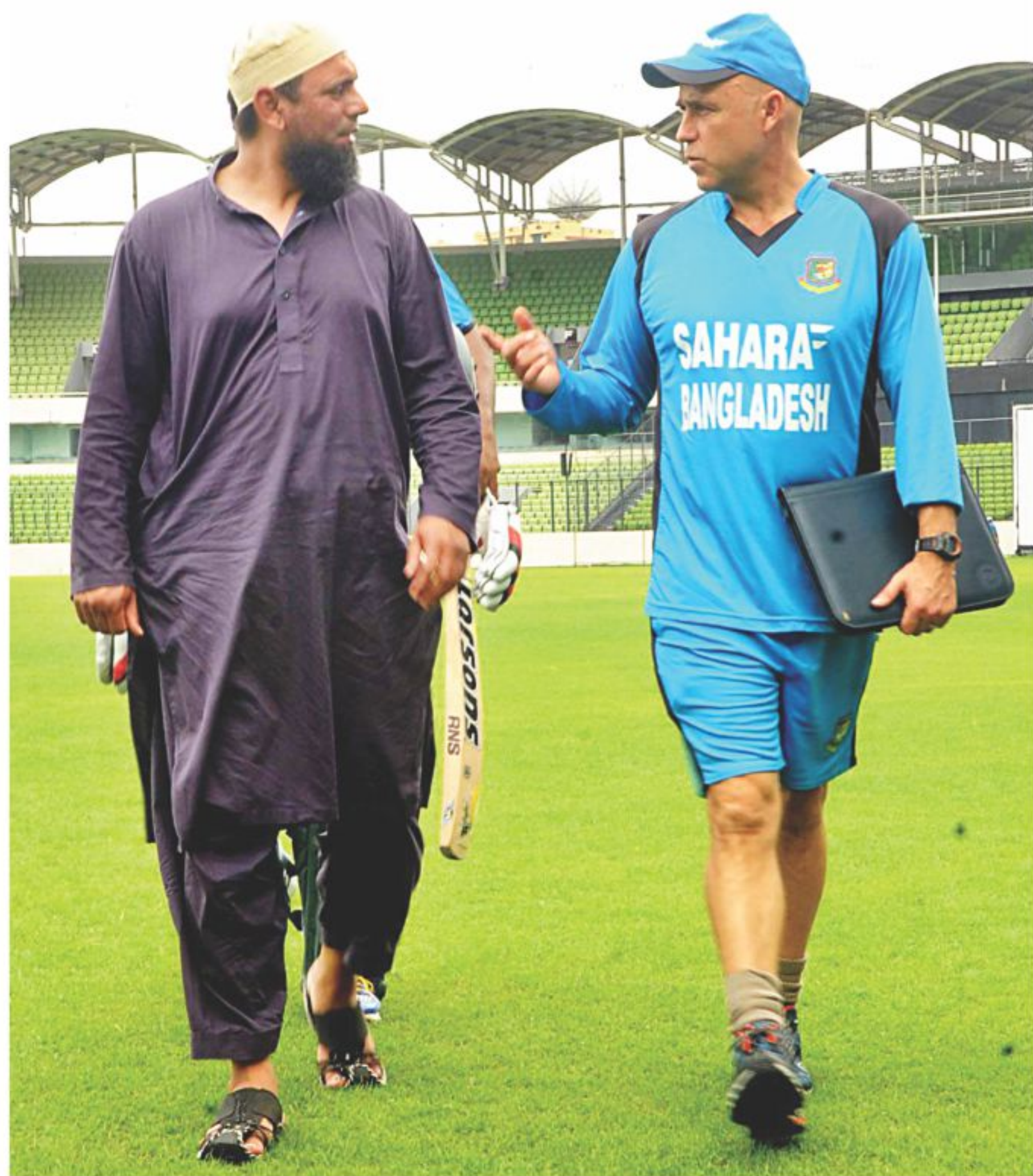
SPORTS REPORTER

Some 2300 budding booters have registered so far for the upcoming Pioneer Football League, which is expected to get underway from the second week of September.

The month-long players' transfer for the Pioneer Football League ended a few days ago with 70 clubs taking part in it even though some 94 clubs initially sent their entries.

"Our target was to register at least 2000 young footballers for the clubs of the Pioneer Football Leagues but participating clubs signed up 2300 booters so far and the number will increase as some clubs have yet to complete their players' quota," said Arif Khan Joy, chairman of the Pioneer Football League Committee.

Khan also informed that some clubs might want to extend the players' transfer window but they would stick to their previous decision and might strike out some 17 clubs who enrolled their names but did not take part in the transfers.



Former Pakistan cricketer and Bangladesh's new spin-bowling coach Saqlain Mushtaq (L) talks to head coach Richard Pybus during training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

The Spin Doctor arrives in city

Cricket

NAIMUL KARIM

Bangladesh's preparation for the upcoming ICC World Twenty20 received a boost as former Pakistani off-spinner, Saqlain Mushtaq, joined the team as a spin-consultant yesterday.

The 35-year-old, who earlier worked with the likes of New Zealand and Australia, is set to spend the next four months working on the country's spin department. "There's no doubt about the quality of the bowlers here. They're doing really well. But it's my job to work on the rough edges and further improve their standard," said Mushtaq.

Bangladesh would hope that Mushtaq's addition to the camp strengthens their spin-attack, an aspect of their game they are heavily dependent upon. "The philosophy of spinners is the same. It doesn't matter if you're a slow-left arm or a right-arm spinner, your basic aim is the same," said Mushtaq.

The bowler who brought the doosra into the world of cricket believes that given the right amount of preparation, the Bangladeshi cricket team can do wonders in the upcoming world cup.

"In T20 cricket, every ball is an event. It's a faster game and you've got to grasp the situation very quickly. You need to control your thoughts, your belief... and there

shouldn't be any doubt regarding any delivery that you bowl. Yes, it's a different formula, but that's cricket after all," said the legendary spinner. He also claims to have devised techniques that would help bowlers master the doosra.

Mushtaq also had special praise for Shakib-Al-Hasan and claims to have followed his game the last couple of years. "He has been performing so well! He is the team's main bowler and I am looking forward to working with him." The team management, according to Mushtaq, is currently focussing on various strategies with an aim to excel in the T20 world cup.

The former Pakistani bowler will now work alongside bowling coach Shane Jurgensen and head coach Richard Pybus till the home series against the West Indies this November.

The national players' immediate assignment is the tour of Trinidad & Tobago where they will play a T20 tournament under the banner of BCBXI, after which they will travel to Sri Lanka to play the ICC World Twenty20 starting from September 18. Then, after a long break the Tigers will return to longer-version cricket when West Indies arrive in Dhaka in November to play a full series.

"I have good memories of this place; I toured here a number of times during my playing years. I am honoured to be a part of the Bangladeshi cricket team today and I hope I can churn out some good results,"

81 booters for nat'l teams called

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday picked 81 footballers for four different squads for the training camp in an effort to strengthen the national teams ahead of various international engagements.

The Red Team, which includes most of the players who represented Bangladesh in last year's SAFF Championship in India, is being considered as the prominent squad. Syed Golam Jilani and Jabid Hossain Apu have been appointed coaches of the Red Team.

The team dubbed Green Team is basically the National A squad which includes players with experience of international matches, but currently not in the reckoning for the national team. Ahsan Ullah Montu and Nurul Haque Manik will train Green squad.

A third squad named Yellow Team features players aged between 20 and 23 while a fourth squad named the White Team has been designed for the players

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Olympic flag in Rio

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The Olympic flag arrived Monday in Rio de Janeiro, which will host the 2016 Summer Games -- a challenge which authorities in Brazil say the city is prepared to conquer.

Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes stepped off a plane carrying the flag, accompanied by Carlos Arthur Nuzman, president of the 2016 Games Organizing Committee and Rio Governor Sergio Cabral, an AFP correspondent at the airport saw.

"The arrival of the Olympic flag marks a period of transformation in the city," Paes told reporters. "This is a unique opportunity for Brazil -- a time of great celebration."

Also on board the plane were Brazilian athletes -- some with medals around their necks -- who competed in the London Games, which ended on Sunday in a blaze of music, fireworks and light.

"Arriving in Rio with the flag was a privilege for us, the athletes," said Roberto Scheidt, who won bronze in Olympic sailing's Star competition with Bruno Prada.

"There is room for much improvement (in terms of the number of medals won) here in Rio," Scheidt added.

Brazil won a total of 17 medals in London -- three gold, five silver and nine bronze.

Hosting the Games will be a huge challenge for a city notorious for its traffic chaos, poor infrastructure and shanty town violence, but authorities say Rio -- which also hosts the 2014 World Cup -- will rise to the occasion.

On Tuesday, the Olympic flag will be flown

to Brasilia for a ceremony attended by President Dilma Rousseff and on Wednesday, Paes will carry it through Rio's northern Alemao complex of shanties -- known here as favelas -- as well as through the western district of Realengo, officials said.

On Sunday, Paes received the Olympic flag from London Mayor Boris Johnson during the ceremony that marked the close of the London Games and the countdown to the 2016 Summer Games, which will be the first held in South America.

On Monday, Brazilian deputy sports minister Luis Fernandes said in London that the 2016 Games would galvanize projects already in place across South America's largest country as well as in Rio, a city of 6.5 million people.

The plans in Rio include the extension of a metro line to the western Barra da Tijuca district. Four express lanes for buses and cars are also under construction.

"The Olympics are an opportunity to invest a huge quantity of funds in infrastructure, an amount that would normally take 15 or 20 years to invest," Fernandes told a press conference in London.

"The Olympics give us an opportunity to concentrate resources to build this infrastructure a bit sooner," he added.

Brazilian Olympic Committee officials and Rio city authorities insist everything will be ready. Some of the venues will be used for the World Cup, but the Olympic Village and other event sites still must be built.

Messi, C'Ron, Iniesta in shortlist

AFP, Paris

World player of the year Lionel Messi was named on Tuesday among the three finalists in the UEFA Best Player in Europe Award shortlist along with Barcelona teammate Andres Iniesta and Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo. Argentina's Messi beat Ronaldo and Xavi Hernandez last year to win the inaugural edition of the prize, which is awarded after a vote of European sports journalists.

The second edition will be presented in Monaco on August 30 on the sidelines of he draw for the Champions League group stages.

Messi was La Liga's top scorer with 50 goals last season, four more than Ronaldo, and capped his season by winning a third Ballon d'Or title.

But Barcelona finished second behind Real Madrid who set records for most La Liga wins in a season with 32, most goals scored (121) and best goal difference (plus-89) en route to a first league title in four years.



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi practises shooting during a training session in Frankfurt on Monday prior to their tonight's international friendly against Germany. Tonight sees a host of European friendlies that includes Sweden versus Brazil. PHOTO: REUTERS

The ultimate Dream Team

AFP, New York

Dream Team? Better make that several Dream Teams, because there was almost nothing keeping US athletes from medals at what one newspaper called an "astounding" London Olympics.

From the pool to the wrestling mat to the soccer field and, in one of Sunday's closing events, the basketball court: this Olympics was a true American moment at a time of grim economic news and political division. "Most medals. Most gold medals. The US left no doubt at the Olympics," CBS Sports said Monday.

Facing a tense presidential election campaign, mass joblessness, and two recent mass shootings, Americans

finally have reason to celebrate.

President Barack Obama has been quick to call and tweet his congratulations to athletes, and the women's gold-winning gymnastics team has been invited to ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange on Tuesday.

A presidential spokesman said he hopes there will be an Olympic reception at the White House too. Obama is "very excited" by the results, the spokesman said.

So was the New York Daily News sports columnist on Monday.

"This really was an astounding Olympics for the Americans, 46 gold medals and 104 medals overall," the paper said.

That tally put the US ahead of rising superpower China and bitter rival Russia, who were followed by host nation Britain and the traditionally

strong sporting nation of Germany.

"MIDAS TOUCH!" screamed the New York Post's main sports headline.

Time magazine crunched the medals numbers, musing on how to weigh the relative value of gold, silver and bronze, then said simply: "In London, however, no math needed. The US won the Olympics, hands down."

And while there were other winners, notably a plucky performance by often underperforming Britain and the astonishing feats of Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, the American stars were unmatched for the sheer variety and consistency of their achievements.

The NBA stars who squeezed past Spain on Sunday carried outsized reputations into London. But, unlike during the fiasco in Athens eight years ago, they showed they were patriotic



Rio de Janeiro mayor Eduardo Paes (L), president of the Brazilian Olympic Committee Carlos Arthur Nuzman (C), and Brazilian athletes wave the Olympic flag upon arrival from the London 2012 Olympics at the Tom Jobim international airport in Rio de Janeiro on Monday. Rio de Janeiro will host the 2016 Olympic Games.

PHOTO: AFP