

BCB mulls revisiting the past amid fears and excitement

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials are considering adding some overseas flair in the country's first class competitions – National Cricket League (NCL) and the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) – a move that has already caused some controversy, and brought forward arguments both for and against it.

BCB is considering including two overseas players in each team in the next NCL. It is also tinkering with the idea of bringing in a foreign team in the BCL and as per sources, 'A' teams of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are being considered.

For the local players, who get a maximum of 12 first class matches in a year, inclusion of foreign players in the NCL would mean fewer opportunities.

"I feel the question is, are you bringing players of a higher quality? For instance, someone like Kane Williamson? Foreign players such as [Kumar] Sangakkara and [Tilakratne] Dilshan have played here before. If you aren't bringing quality players, then a local player isn't playing for someone who is not of high calibre... What benefit would come from including a foreign team in BCL?" a veteran domestic player told The Daily Star under conditions of anonymity.

On November 17, 1997, 11 Bangladeshi players made their first-class debut against Northern Conference in The Shell Conference in Hamilton, New Zealand. Seven of them later played in Bangladesh's inaugural Test against India.

In the match, pacer Hasibul Hossain Shanto picked up 6 for 143, becoming the first Bangladeshi to take a five-wicket haul in first-class cricket. Al Shahriar became Bangladesh's maiden first-class centurion in the third game of the tournament at Dunedin. Bashar and Co played seven matches in that 1997-98 tour.

"You can actually invest money on local players instead of bringing in foreign players. We lack facilities," another player opined.

But not all players are against the move, as a young speedster said, "I think the idea of a new team in BCL is a good one. Once we went to India's Bengaluru where our 'A' team played against their first-class team. It can be good as it could provide tougher competition since Sri Lanka 'A' are a good side."

The idea of a foreign team in the country's domestic first class competition may seem without precedence. But Bangladesh's own first-class journey began with such an endeavor.

Just a few months after winning the 1997 ICC Trophy, Bangladesh were invited to take part in the inaugural edition of The Shell Conference – a first-class tournament in New Zealand.

Former Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar, who was part of that series, feels it can be a good move.

"It won't be the first instance since in 1997, we played in New Zealand's first-class competition. The experience was really good," recalls Bashar.

"I don't see a problem. In the English County Championship, one foreign player is allowed per side. Even in Bangladesh, when Biman was champion, Imran Farhat [Pakistan left-handed opener] was playing for us and I actually learned a lot from him before I played international cricket. Shaheed Mahmood was a leg spinner [from Pakistan] who played for Chattogram, and I learned a lot about playing leg spin from him."

"It's not something new and it can help our players a lot. I don't know if it will happen but it can be good," said Bashar, who serves as head of operations in BCB's game development.

While there are doubts over availability of foreign players during the October-November window of NCL, it could significantly help bolster the country's domestic competitions even as arguments exists both for and against it.



Bangladesh captain Afeida Khandoker looks focused during their final practice session at home on Thursday, ahead of leaving for Laos on August 2 to play in the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers.

What to WATCH

Sony Sports 1
England vs
India
5th Test, Day 2
Live from 4:00 pm

T Sports
Zimbabwe vs
New Zealand
1st Test, Day 3
Live from 2:00 pm



On 21, India captain Shubman Gill ran himself out on Thursday's opening day of the fifth and deciding Test against England, coming close to Sunil Gavaskar's national record for runs in a single series. Gill needs just 32 more runs to overhaul Gavaskar's mark (774) for the most runs scored by an Indian batter in a Test series -- achieved against the West Indies in 1971. Gill struck several elegant trademark drives and rarely looked in trouble till he pushed the ball into the offside and set off for a single that was never on. India were 85-3 at Tea after rain stopped play for a second time at the Oval in a game that the tourists must win to square the five-match series at 2-2.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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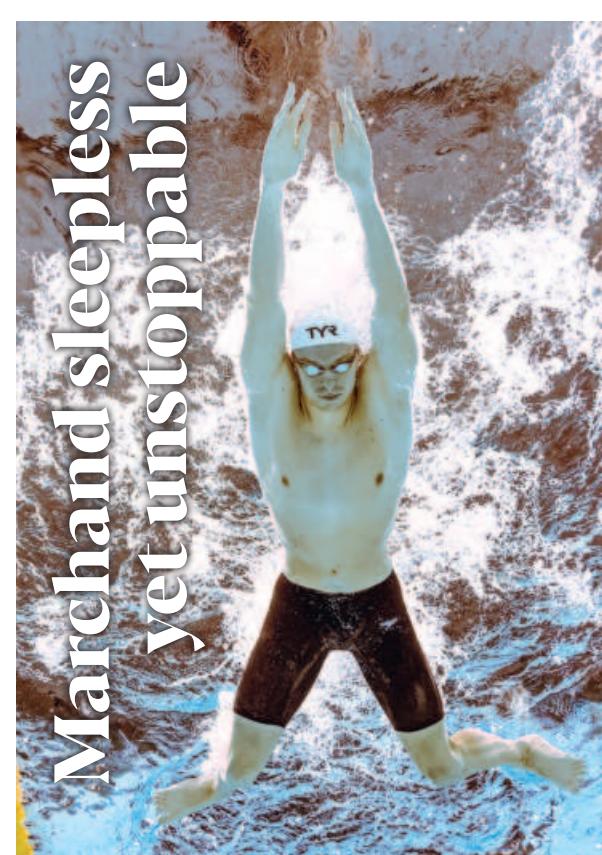
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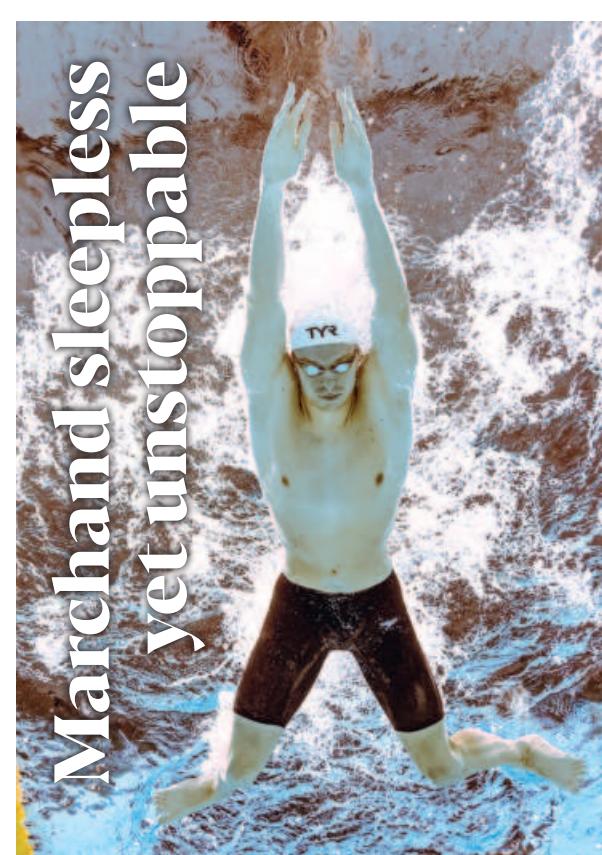
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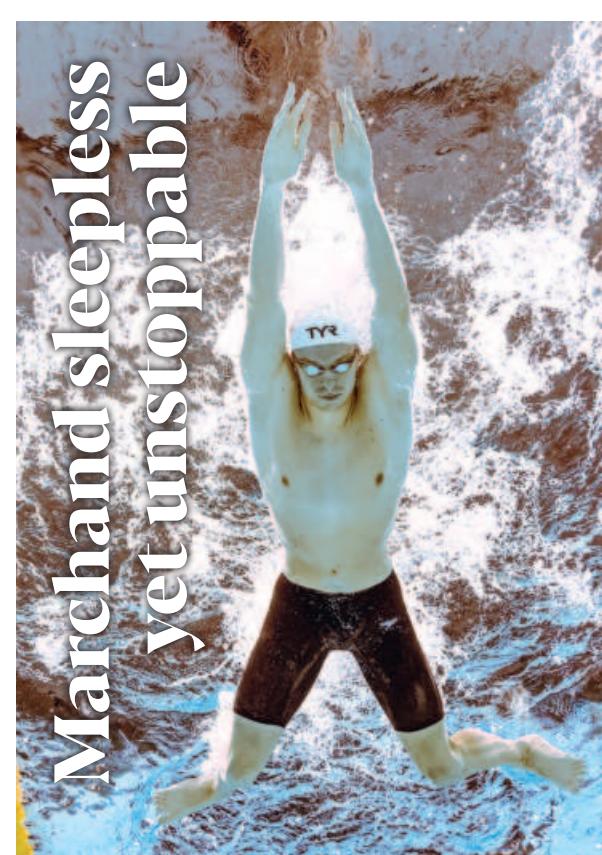
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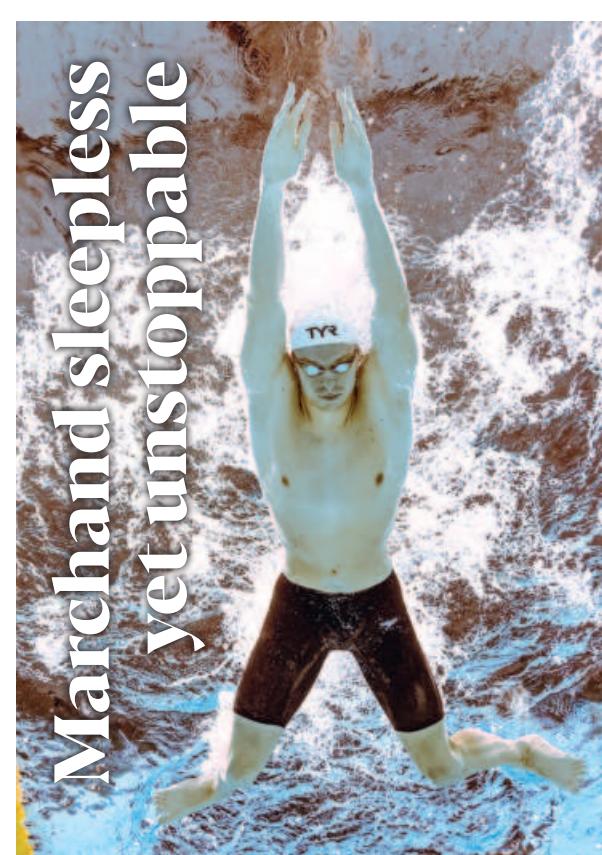
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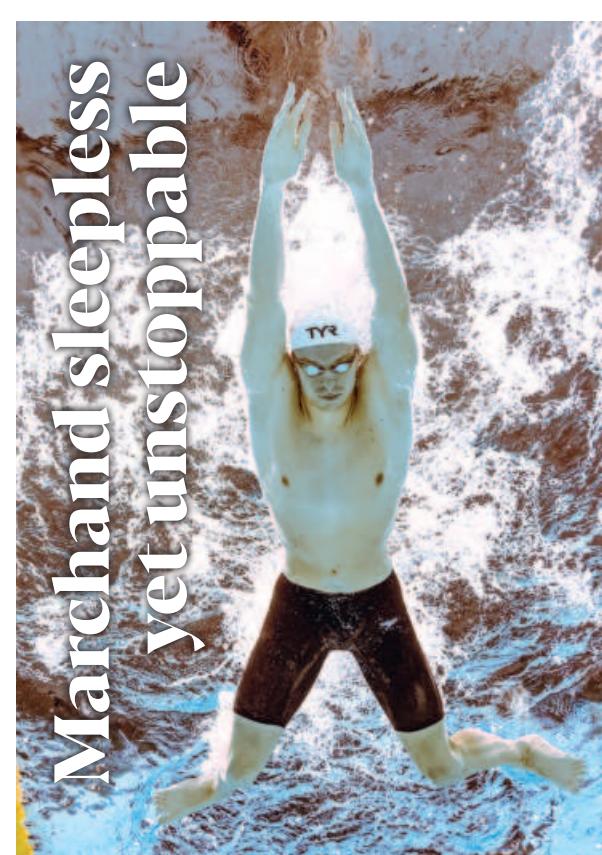
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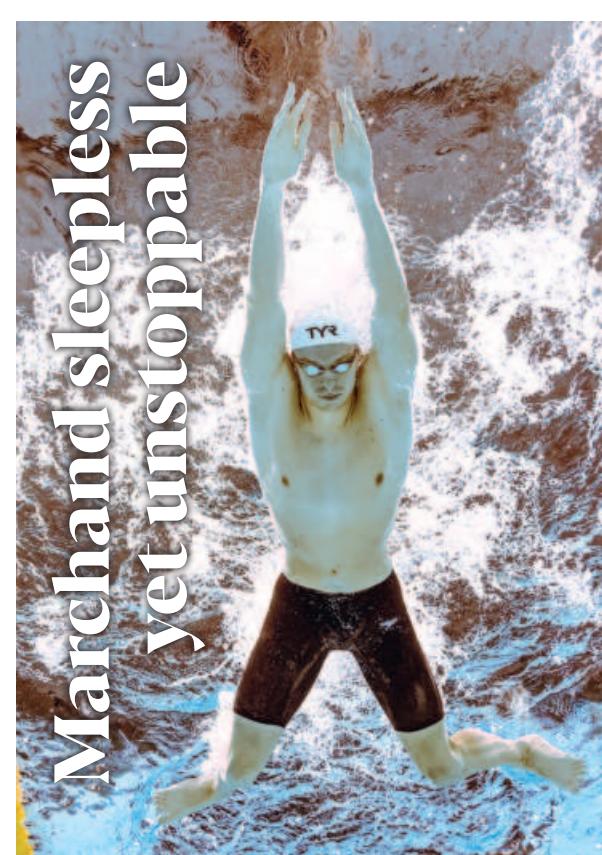
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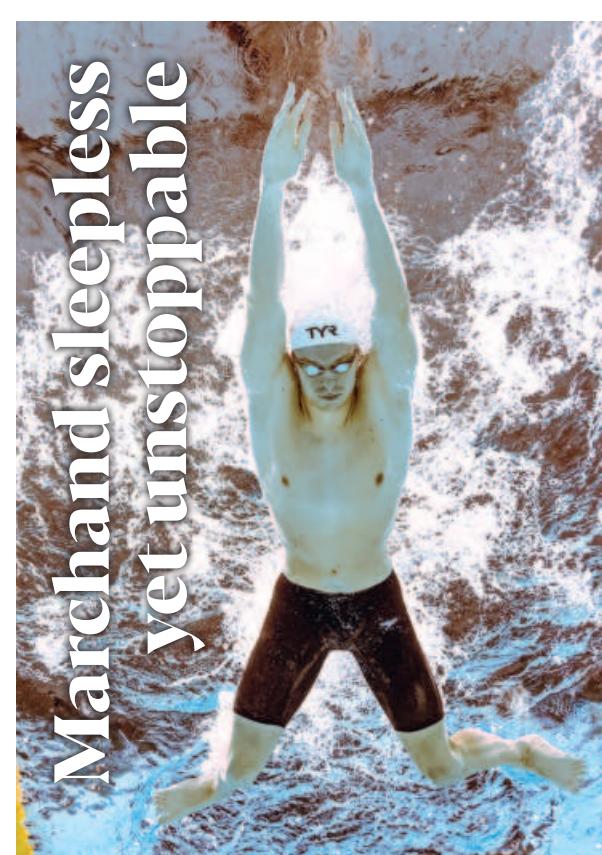
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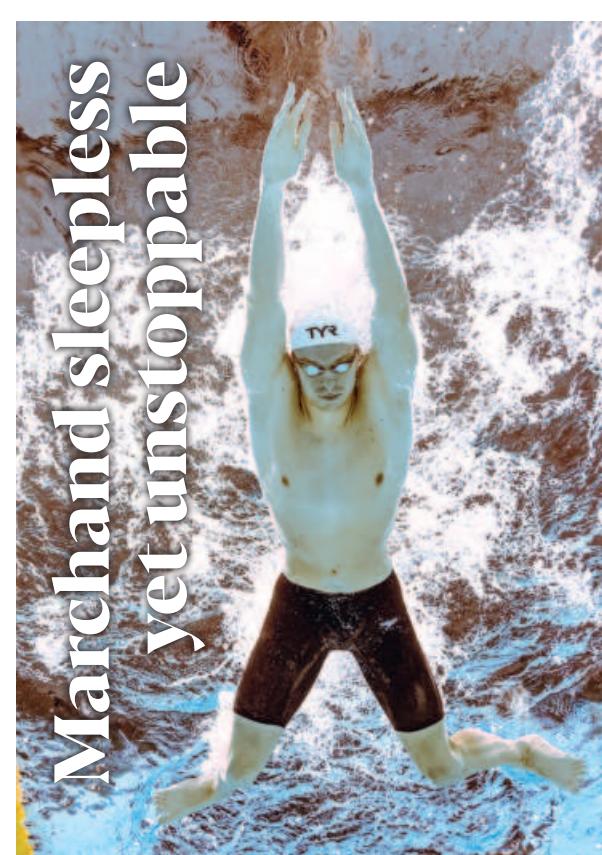
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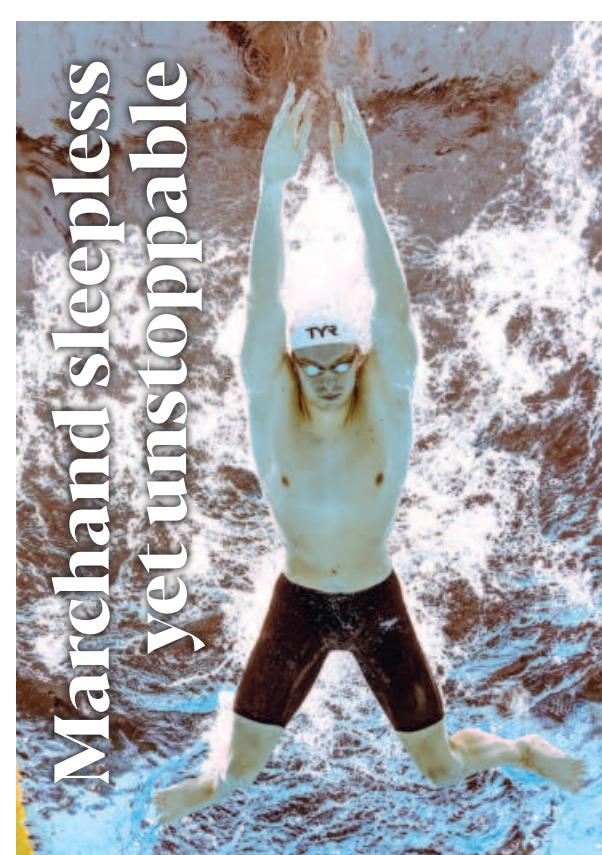
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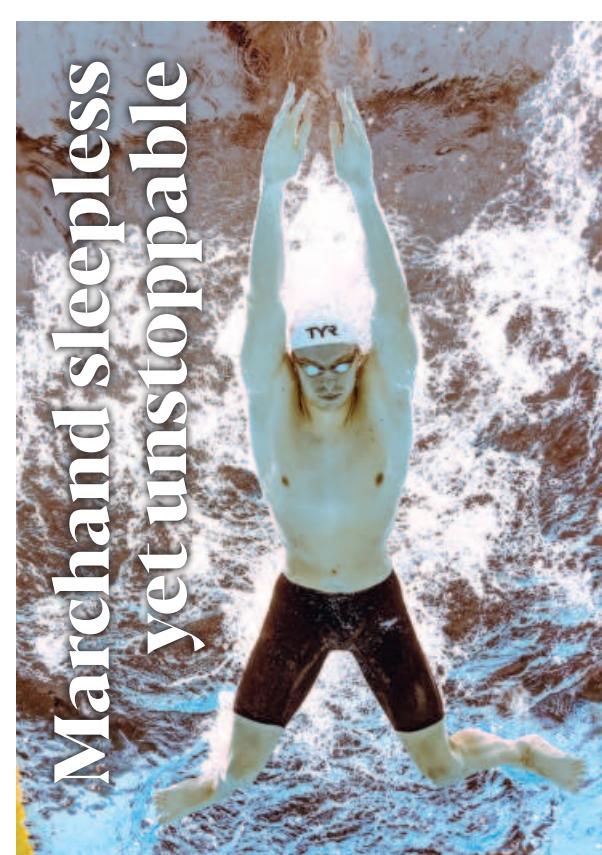
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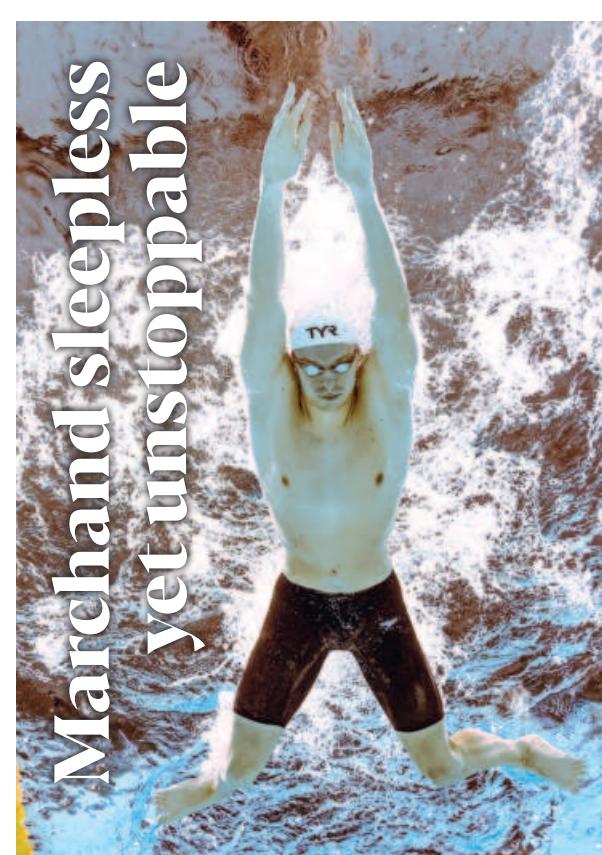
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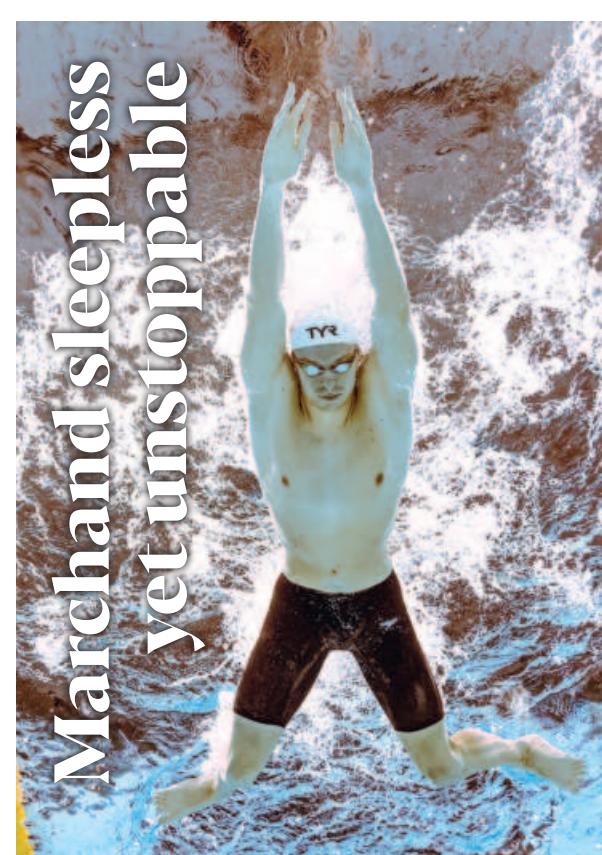
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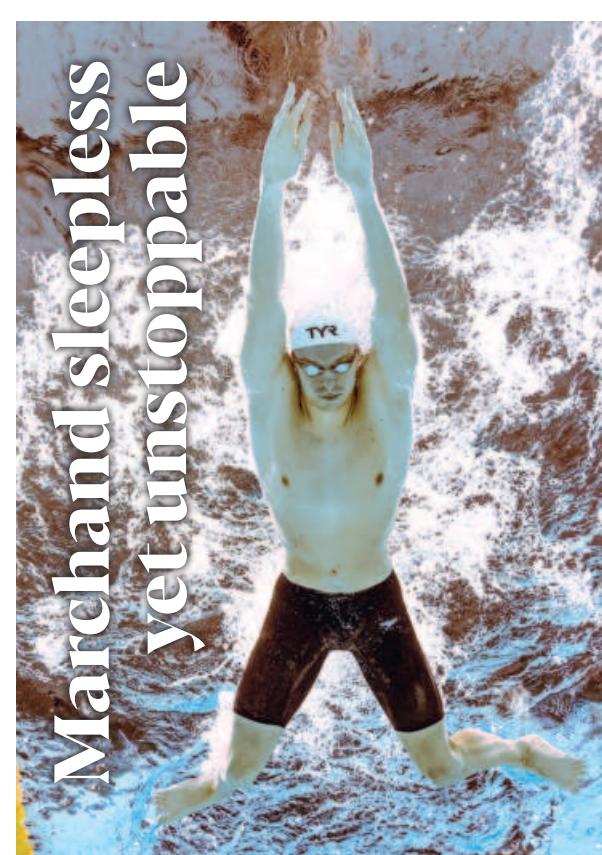
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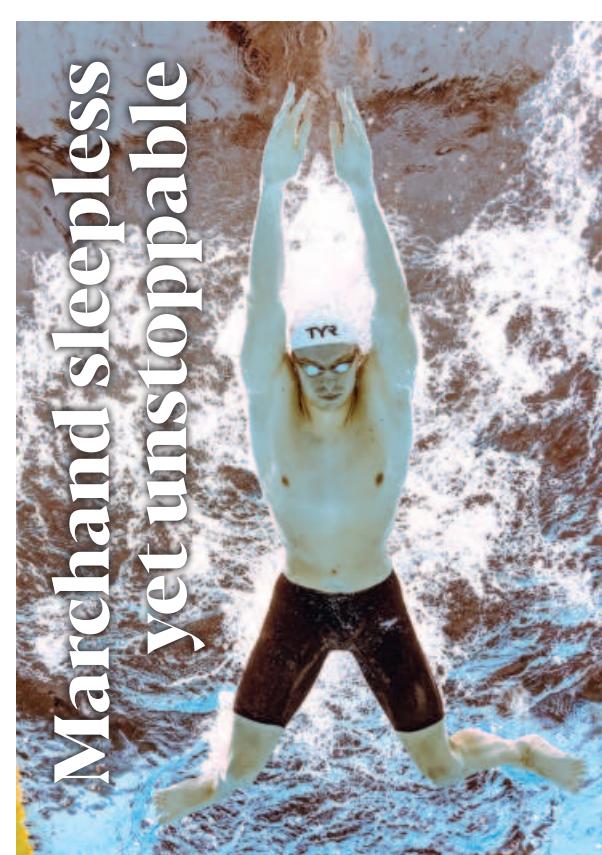
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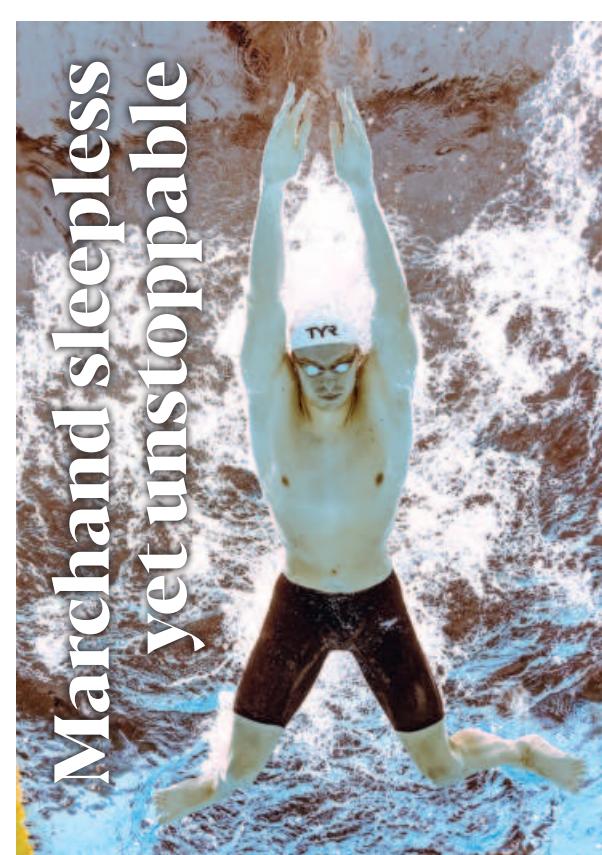
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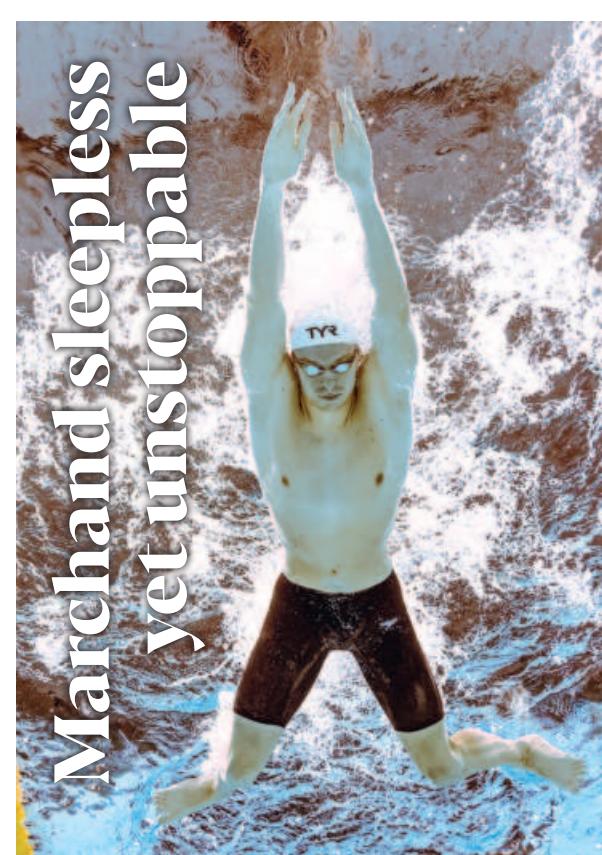
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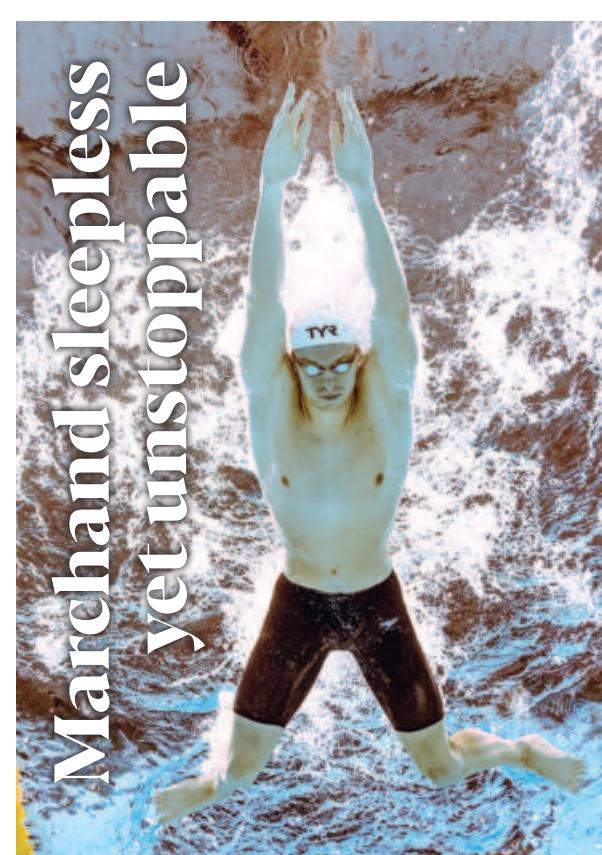
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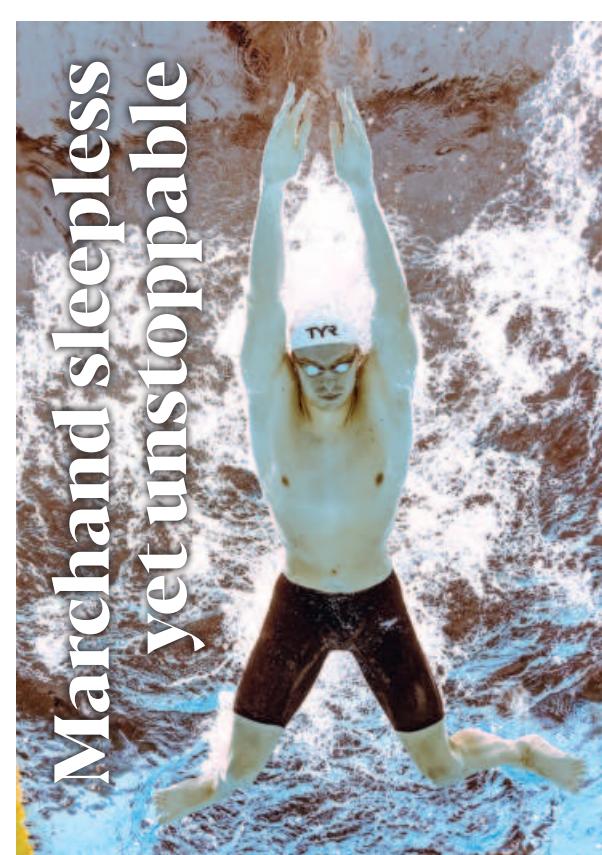
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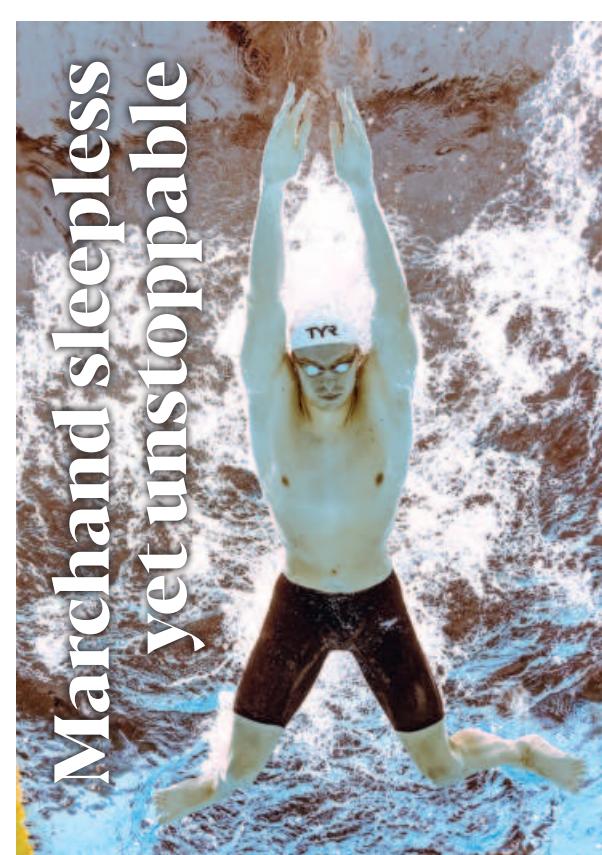
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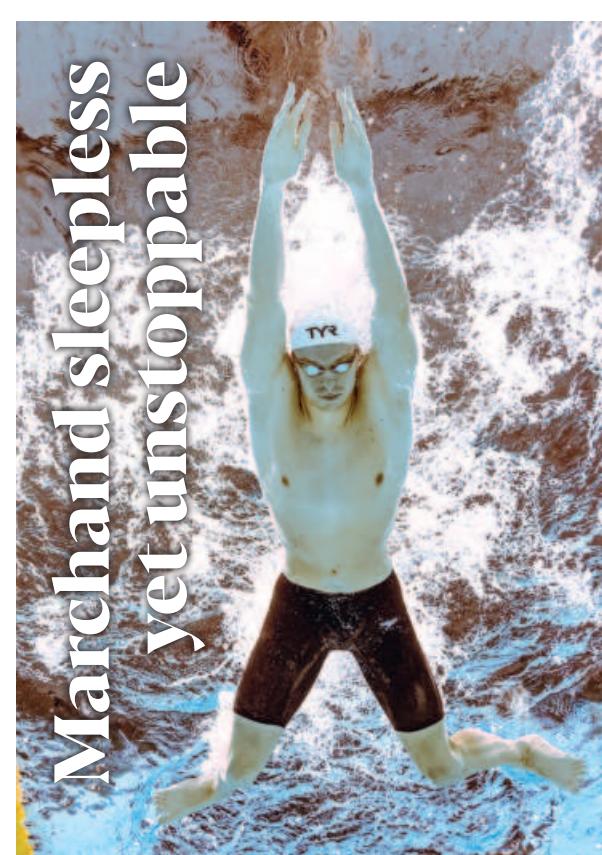
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