

U.S. athletes have bad day in Barcelona

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Dave Johnson almost fouled out of the decathlon Wednesday, a Dan-dy start to a dismal day for America at the Summer Nolympics.

A women's basketball dynasty is over, and America's boys of summer go home empty-handed. So does world 200-meter champion Michael Johnson, who failed to qualify for the final.

And now, the International Olympic Committee says Jud Logan, whose fourth place was the best for the United States in the hammer throw in 36 years, tested positive for steroids.

Even winning wasn't all it was cracked up to be. Ask Jennifer Capriati. She's the most unpopular woman in town after beating Barcelona's own Arantxa Sanchez Vicario with Spanish King Juan Carlos in the stands.

"It was tough out there, but I blocked it out pretty well, I think," said the 16-year-old Capriati, who plays Steffi Graf for the gold medal Friday.

Dave Johnson, the one of "Dan and Dave" shoe commercial fame, was flagged for fouls on all three of his attempts in the shot put, which would have put him out of that part of the decathlon — any shot at a medal suddenly gone.

But one judge overruled the other, Johnson got another chance, and he was still in the hunt, ninth with five of the 10 events left on Thursday.

"I'm having an off day, but nothing major, fortunately," Johnson said. "But you never know what your body's going to do on any given day."

Any designs the U.S. women had on a third straight basketball gold were dashed in a 79-73 semifinal loss to the Unified Team. They play Cuba for the bronze medal Thursday, while the Unified Team meets China for the gold. China beat Cuba 109-70 in the other semifinal.

"I think the majority of us have a feeling of letdown, disappointment, anger, frustration," U.S. team member Teresa Weatherspoon said.

And the baseball team lost to Japan 8-3 in the bronze-medal game. So much for the national pastime.

"We have nothing to show for this but fond memories," outfielder Jeffrey Hammonds said.

Cuba won the gold medal with an 11-1 victory over Taiwan.

With all of the day's 12 medal events over, the Unified Team led with 84 total, 35 gold. The United States had 74 medals, 21 gold, and Germany had 57 medals, 18 gold.

Still in the chase for American medals was the two-time defending Olympic champion men's volleyball team, which defeated the Unified Team 12-15, 15-4, 15-10, 15-11, advancing to the semifinals against Brazil on Friday.

One half of the ballyhooed "Dan and Dave" duo already is gone. Dan O'Brien, the world champion, blew each of his pole vault attempts at the trials and didn't even make the team.

Johnson barely avoided an eerily similar exit. He would have been allowed to continue in the event, but without any shot put points, he couldn't have won even a bronze.

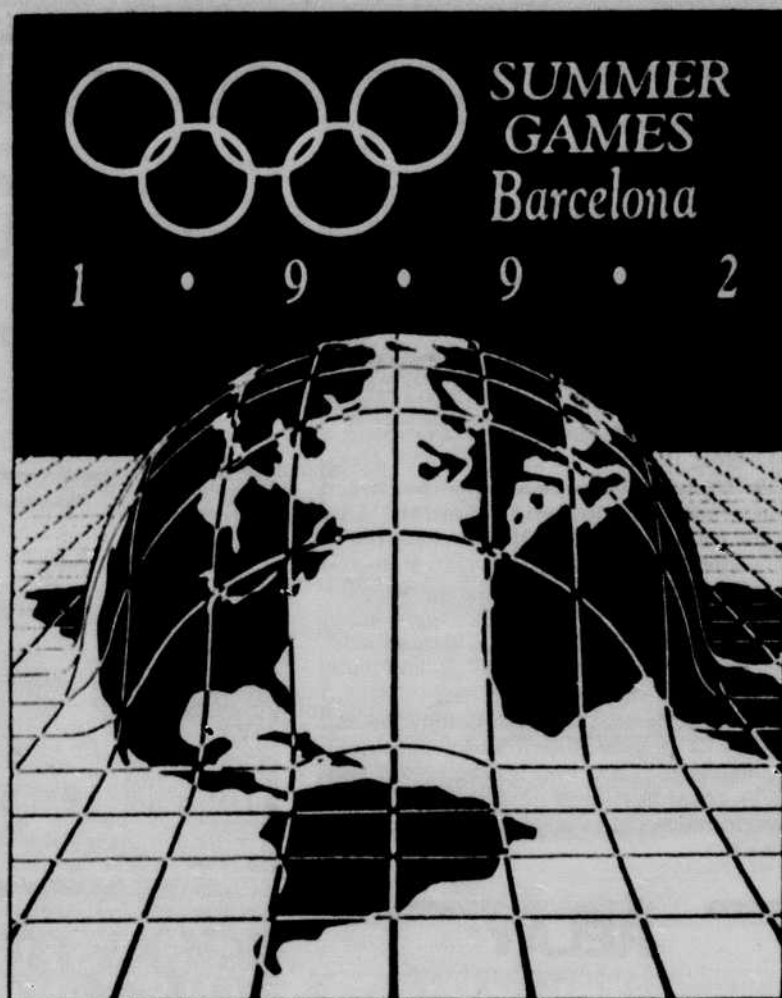
When the red flag went up on his third throw, Johnson stood in the circle, his hands on his hips.

"I asked him, 'Are you sure?'" Johnson said. "He said yes. But there were two officials watching the toe board, and one saw it as a foul, the other saw it as a fair throw."

"Fortunately, the larger and more powerful referee saw it and said it was a fair throw," Johnson said.

After the reprieve, Johnson threw 50 feet, 1 and three-fourths inches, a personal best, and moved to ninth from 13th after poor performances in the 100 meters and long jump.

Spain, Czechoslovakia and France protested the judge's decision, but it was denied.



Women hoopsters beaten by Unified in landmark upset

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — The runaway, almost boring, triumphs of the United States in basketball ended Wednesday when the Unified Team handed American women their first loss in the Olympics since 1976.

The heavily favored Americans, so confident of gold, now must find the strength to battle for the bronze after losing 79-73 in the semifinals.

The loss came at the expense of a group considered to be the best women's team ever assembled in the United States, one that had a three-time Olympian, five other veterans of the 1988 Seoul Games and six other players with vast international experience.

"I'm not shocked because any time you step on the court any team can lose, and that's my mentality when I go out and play," said guard Teresa Edwards. "But we have a team with a lot of talent, and it's hard to realize all that talent couldn't come through in a game."

Credit the Unified Team for that — the first team to beat the American women in the Olympics since they did it under the flag of the Soviet Union. After the U.S. boycott in 1980, the American women had won the Olympic gold in '84 and '88.

Not this time, though. A zone defense and the ability to break the U.S. press allowed the Unified Team to build an 11-point lead early in the second half and cope with a late U.S. run.

"I tell my players that United States is the best team in the world," Unified coach Evgueni Gomelsky said. "But I tell them they are good players, too, so just go play."

Men's volleyball continues march toward medal

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Their hair is starting to come back and so is the power of the U. S. volleyball team, which on Wednesday defeated the Unified Team to gain a semifinal meeting with Brazil.

The Americans won 12-15, 15-10, 15-4, 15-11 in a score that almost mirrored the outcome of the 1988 Olympic final in Los Angeles, when the United States beat the Soviet Union 13-15, 15-10, 15-4, 15-8.

"The shaving of the heads united the team behind this cause and the cause is getting greater," said Steve Timmons, who led the team with 25 kills.

The Americans shaved their heads after officials overturned their early-round victory against Japan because of a faulty ruling by a referee.

Since going bald, the Americans are 5-0. The Unified Team began much as it did when it was the Soviet Union squad in Los Angeles, with explosive power. Then the U.S. team called a timeout and Timmons had a few words for his teammates.

"I reminded them of the L.A. final and I told them that if we keep fighting, they'll come down to earth pretty soon," said Timmons, of Newport Beach, Calif. "They did and we controlled them pretty much after that."

Apart from Timmons, 33, four other U.S. starters also started the final in 1988 and two more U.S. players were on that team.

"They were on fire from the start, they were hammering away and passing great. They always come out that way," Timmons said. "But we kept on reminding ourselves that they won't last."

The Americans are seeking to become the first team to win three volleyball gold medals in a row and Timmons could become the first man to do so.

Apart from Timmons, Bob Ctvrtlik, of Long Beach, Calif., Doug Partie, of Santa Barbara, Calif., and Jeff Stork, of Topanga Canyon, Calif., were also starters on the 1988 team.

Earlier, the Netherlands upset world champion Italy 15-9, 8-15, 12-15, 15-2, 17-16 and will meet Cuba, which beat Spain 16-14, 15-9, 15-6 in Friday's semifinals.

Brazil beat Japan 15-12, 15-5, 15-12 to remain unbeaten. The United States was 0-2 against the Unified Team for the day, after upset losses by the women's basketball team and the men's water polo team. But the volleyball players did not go down the same road.

The Unified Team pulled away for a 10-4 lead behind powerful hitting by Dmitry Fomin and Ruslan Olikhver, an ethnic Russian from Latvia, and got the majority of the crowd in its favor, with the cheers of American fans often drowned out.

"Tastes Great, Less Filling," chanted the American crowd, echoing a beer commercial. And the non-Americans who had been cheering the Unified Team became silent.

Johnson's quest for 200 gold stopped by poor performance

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Michael Johnson went from the heat of Olympic hype and competition into the air-conditioned interview room and the chilling realization he was done.

"I didn't make it," he said after a minute's silent reflection. "It didn't happen."

After the big buildup and a following controversy, the world champion sprinter failed to qualify for the 200-meter final Wednesday, finishing a distant sixth.

With his earlier decision not to compete in the 400 meters and his berth in the 1,600-meter relay in question, Johnson's Olympics may be over.

"I just didn't feel like Michael Johnson today," he said in a dull monotone. "It's just not there."

Ranked No. 1 in the 200 and 400 meters the past two years, Johnson was an early pick to take the gold in both competitions. As late as last week the former Baylor star proclaimed himself the best 400-meter runner in the business.

With world record-holder Butch Reynolds fighting allegations of steroid use and failing to qualify during the Olympic trials in New Orleans, Johnson would have been an important addition to the U.S. effort.

But Johnson, who has a habit of referring to himself in the third person, opt-

ed out of the 400. He complained the original Barcelona schedule would have him running the two different races on the same day.

He wouldn't relent, not even after the International Amateur Athletic Federation shifted the schedule to put the 200 and 400 finals on following days.

"They're too late," he said at the trials in June.

After Wednesday night's showing, it was Johnson who was too late for a medal. An intimidating competitor who dominated the 200 over the past two years, Johnson slipped to the back of the pack after the final turn, falling to his knees after he crossed the finish line in sixth place.

"The Olympic gold is what I wanted," he said. "It's behind me now."

It was up to U.S. teammate Mike Marsh to set an Olympic record of 19.73 seconds in the other heat — an Olympic record and only one-hundredth of a second shy of the world record.

Johnson blamed his showing on a virus that ambushed him a few weeks ago. A fever and diarrhea cost him a week's workouts, 10 pounds and his endurance.

Miller plans 30-city tour

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Shannon Miller, who vaulted into the limelight as the best female U.S. gymnast at the Summer Olympics, has lined up a 30-city tour and several television appearances.

Next up could be cereal box fame.

"I would love to be on a Wheaties box," the 4-foot-7 gymnast said during a news conference after her arrival home in Oklahoma on Wednesday. "It interests me a lot," she said of possible endorsements.

Miller, 15, of Edmond, Okla., won two silver and three bronze medals in Barcelona, the most by a U.S. female gymnast since Mary Lou Retton in the 1984 Olympics.

More than 2,000 people were on hand to cheer her return home.

Miller is being represented by ProServ, the same agency that represents Michael Jordan, said Steve Nunno, her coach.

"She really doesn't understand a lot of what's been happening," Nunno said. "We just left the Olympic Village yesterday, and in the Olympic Village there was no hoopla for Shannon Miller, really, because there were Olympic gold medalists everywhere."