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It was destined from the beginning

Team USA had too much going against it for Olympic glory

Instead of having their names on the back of their jerseys, members of the United States Olympic hockey team should have had "Doomed" embroidered on them.

A fast, yet careless offense, poor defensive skills, poor organizational skills, poor coaching and all-around poor play killed a good team with realistic hopes of advancing to the medal round at Calgary.

Alas, those hopes were dashed when the tired U.S. team succumbed 4-1 to West Germany last Sunday. During the exhibition season, the United States defeated the West Germans nine times.

The U.S. played 60 games during

the pre-Olympic exhibition season, playing mostly college teams. However, interspersed with those college tilts were battles with a few National Hockey League teams, other Olympic teams and a series of games with a Soviet team not up to par with the true Soviet national team.

The team did all this in six months, during which adjustments were made, and players were both added or cut. In fact, the final cut for the team was not made until two weeks before the Winter Games, hardly enough time for the finished product to come together.

Some fans and reporters were grumbling before the Games began, saying there was no way a team led by Dave Peterson, a life-long high-school coach, could advance very far in the Games.

Apparently they were right. Peterson was cut to pieces by reporters and critics alike, being accused of fostering a "Bobby Knight" atmosphere among the team. He

rarely accommodated writers and rarely gave honest answers.

"What kind of a system do you play under?" one foreign correspondent asked Peterson. "There was absolutely no organization on the ice."

Peterson curtly replied, "I'm not going to answer that. It's a stupid question. Obviously we spent the past six months doing nothing."

Well, not exactly nothing, Dave. But close.

Team USA played more than 60 games in the interim after tryouts and before the Games, but the competition wasn't exactly top-caliber. The college teams on the schedule were not the quality of say, the Universities of Minnesota or Maine, and the team didn't play against many of the quality NHL players around, either.

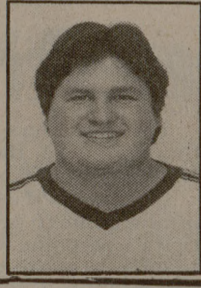
Canada, on the other hand, played a rough exhibition schedule, including a series of games with the

Soviet Olympic team that is recently marauding through Poland. The Canadians came out on top against the Soviets more times than one, including some very close wins.

Actually, the Americans performed very well during the exhibition season. They just fell when the wins started counting.

Token wins over patsies like Austria and Norway were guaranteed even though the team struggled against both of them at some point but the tradition and winningacies of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union were just too much. Team USA fell against both in half-hearted comebacks.

Sadly, even if the U.S. had things right it still might not have been enough against the awesome memory of Team USA's sparkling 1980 campaign. That memory, unfortunately, will never be topped.



Loyd Brumfield
Sports viewpoint

More gold goes East; Nykanen gets second

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Flying Finn Matti Nykanen and Frank-Peter Roetsch of East Germany became double gold medalists Tuesday, and the Winter Olympics were a Soviet bloc party again.

The beer from Bonnie Blair's victory bash hadn't even gone flat before America's day of glory turned into another day of gold for the East.

Only the volatile Matti Nukes, as he is called, could slow down the Soviets.

Nykanen, who already won the 70-meter jump, added the 90-meter title with a hill-record jump of 118.5 meters in the first round and became the Games' first double jumping gold medalist since the event was split in 1964.

"I knew I'd won after the first jump," said Nykanen, who won the 90-meter jump at Sarajevo four years ago.

Roetsch won the 10-kilometer biathlon, staging the Games' first individual sweep of biathlon events, while Soviets Valeri Medvedtsev and Sergei Tchepikov finished 2-3. Roetsch won the 20-kilometer biathlon Saturday.

"After the relay, we'll drink much more beer," Roetsch said, looking forward to the prospect of a third gold medal. "Hopefully, we'll have a reason to celebrate."

The Soviets now have a leading 20 medals, and East Germany has 15. The two countries are tied with seven gold and have won 35 of 84 medals offered so far.

Speed skater Karen Kania of East Germany, a bronze medalist to Blair's gold in the 500 meters Mon-



day night, was entered in the 3,000. One more medal and she will become the most successful speed skater in Olympic history with seven medals spanning three Games.

"I remember the first time I skated behind her," Blair said. "I thought I was skating behind a male skater."

Natalia Bestemianova and Andrei Bukin of the Soviet Union entered Tuesday night's ice dance freestyle with a commanding lead in an event that promised at least two more Soviet medals.

Meanwhile, America's best hope in the biathlon, Josh Thompson of Gunnison, Colo., was a disappointment again, unable to add to the U.S. medal count that Blair pushed to four when she won the 500-meter.

Thompson, who was 25th in the 20 kilometers, was 27th on Tuesday after missing five targets.

"I can't remember two races I've had so bad back-to-back," Thompson said. "I don't remember the last time I've missed so many (targets), and I don't want to, either."

US women skaters not talking to media

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — You can find Katarina Witt and the Soviet skaters. You just can't talk to them.

The American women figure skaters are around, too. But Debi Thomas, Caryn Kadavy and Jill Trenary aren't talking either.

On the eve of the compulsories in Olympic figure skating, paranoia has struck. The people who are in charge of the various skating delegations are sheltering the athletes and their coaches. The gag rule is in effect.

"I'd love to talk to you but I can't right now," Alex McGowan, Thomas' usually loquacious coach, said Tuesday. "We've been told not to."

McGowan promised he would be available later in the day, but a U.S. team official frowned when he said it.

Kadavy just shrugged when asked a question and said, simply, "Sorry." Trenary smiled as she left the practice arena but also declined to answer questions.

Thomas was nowhere to be found after finishing practice. Not that she would have spoken, either — she was the only member of the team who declined to talk upon arriving at Calgary two weeks ago.

What's going on? When East Germany's Witt or the Soviets have practices closed to outsiders, it's pretty much accepted. That's how they operate.

For the Americans to clam up is unusual. "Arrangements have been

made for them to speak to the media only at specific times," team leader Joan Gruber insisted.

When told that McGowan and Carlo Fassi, who trains both Kadavy and Trenary, had agreed to speak at the school figures practice, Gruber said, "That's been changed."

Why the sudden unwillingness to be interviewed, particularly since the men, pairs and dance competitors all talked?

"I don't know," said McGowan, who didn't look particularly happy about it. "I'll be glad to talk to you later, when they said we can."

Witt talked to the media in a conference, at a heavily attended press conference where she was charming and one person tried to charm her with a marriage proposal. Thomas also was cooperative at a news conference for the three U.S. women.

"It's getting to the time where training gets really grueling," Thomas said then, which might explain, in part, the reluctance to make the skaters available.

Thomas won her second U.S. crown in early January. The 1987 world champion is considered the main challenger to three-time world winner Witt, the 1986 Olympic gold medalist.

The 20-year-old from San Jose, Calif., said before the Olympics that she isn't letting the intensity of the Games get to her, although the recent behavior of U.S. team officials indicates it has gotten to them.

Spurs draftee must make career choice

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — San Antonio Spurs center David Robinson will have to decide whether to petition the new Navy secretary for an early release of his two-year commitment, said club chairman Angelo Drossos.

Robinson, the 7-foot-1 All-America center who signed an eight-year, \$24 million contract with the Spurs last November, currently is attending classes at the Navy's Civil Engineering Corps school in Port Hueneme, Calif.

When released, he will return to his permanent assignment at Kings Bay, Ga., Naval Base.

Drossos said he was deluged with telephone calls after Navy Secretary James Webb resigned Monday. Webb had ruled that Robinson would not be allowed to play in the NBA until the 1989-90 season because of a two-year commitment to the Navy.

"I've had calls all day about David," Drossos told the *San Antonio Express-News*. "It all depends on David and who they name as secretary. I have not had any conversations with him, so I don't know what he plans to do."

"My first desire is for him to play for San Antonio when he can," Drossos said. "My second desire is for him to play in the Olympics and do well, although that will not tell how good of a pro center he will be."

Robinson, who could not be reached for comment Monday, has said repeatedly he wants to fulfill his Navy commitment.

But Bob Bass, the Spurs vice president in charge of basketball operations, agreed with Drossos.

"That is his enlistment and his commitment," Bass said. "It will all be up to David Robinson and his people."

Record-shattering speed skater becoming this Olympics' Retton

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — America may have just found itself a new sweetheart: Bonnie Blair.

The speed skater boosted the U.S. gold-medal count and spirits at the Winter Olympics, racing away in the 500 meters in world-record time.

And just as America fell for a pint-sized gymnast named Mary Lou Retton four years ago, her agent is hoping the nation is ready for another fling, this time with the freckle-faced Blair.

Jim Fink, from Blair's hometown of Champaign, Ill., couldn't put a dollar value on Monday night's performance — she won the race in 39.10 seconds, hopped atop the medals podium and cried as she sang the national anthem.

"She's got everything that Mary Lou Retton had," he said at a news conference Tuesday. "I hate myself for making that reference but that's the nearest one we have."

"She was the small person who went out and beat the big person, the David-and-Goliath type of thing. She is very personable and accessible."



Graphic by Susan C. Akin

That's pretty much what they said about Retton, who won the women's all-around gymnastics gold medal at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

"Sure, it would be nice to get a little something out of it, but it's not something I'm relying on or going to base the rest of my life on," Blair said. "I want to go to school, get myself a degree and get a job later in life."

Blair, 23, is close to completing deal with DisneyWorld, Fink said, whose campaign slogan is "Bonnie Blair, a woman and a winner."

"Let them play with that while on Madison Avenue," he added, adding that Blair also has endorsement possibilities with food, cosmetics and women's clothing companies.

Blair's blistering time edged the 39.12-second mark put up just 48 minutes earlier by East German Christa Rothenburger who skated two pairs earlier.

"She sure made me look good tonight," Fink said with a laugh. Blair is the youngest child of a large skating family. She has two brothers and sisters who were also skaters, as were her father and mother.

Her brother, Rob, was a fraternity brother of pro basketball player Jack Sikma, who is one of Bonnie's sponsors. Rob found out about a year ago he had a heart murmur.

"Every since a year ago the situation hasn't changed," Blair said.

Ag women's tennis team opens SWC play against No. 12 Horns

The Texas A&M women's tennis team will open Southwest Conference play today against its toughest opponent of the season, 12th-ranked Texas at 1 p.m. at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

The Lady Aggies will take a 7-1 spring mark into the match, while the Lady Longhorns bring in a 4-0 season mark, including wins over SWC teams Rice, Arkansas and Baylor.

A&M is coming off dual wins in

Las Vegas against the University of California-Irvine and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. The Lady Aggies lost to the University of the Pacific in a match last Friday.

A&M's Cindy Churchill went undefeated over the weekend, giving her a 7-1 record for the year. Cindy Crawford and Susan Williams have 6-2 records, and the doubles team of Churchill and Derryn Haygarth is 5-1.

UT is led by senior All-America

Ann Groubeck, the preseason player in the nation.

A&M Coach Bobby Klein said the team is ready for the match.

"We're really excited about the match," he said. "We've been looking forward to it for a long time and even though we're a little nervous in it, we've got a lot of confidence going in to it."

After the UT match, A&M will play host to Baylor at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Tennis Center.