

American athletes under Athens microscope

Continued from page 1C

America should stay home on this one.

This won't be a bona-fide Olympics for the United States. Chances are, it will be more like a bunch of sports mercenaries going over to compete. How sporting would that be?

As much as many of us love to liken sports to war-

fare, it is not. And this certainly is not the true spirit of the Olympics.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not the type of person who sits in his living room and weeps softly whenever an American athlete stands on the podium and mouths the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner" after winning another gold medal for his country. But

doing things like waving an American flag - or any country's flag, for that matter - represents the essence of the Olympics. Shoot, it's what makes the Olympics the biggest sporting event in the world.

"Unfortunately, using the flag as a prop or a piece of apparel or indulging in boasting behavior is becoming

part of our society in sport because, every night on TV, we see our athletes - professional, college or otherwise - taunting their opponents and going face to face with each other," Moran said. "We are trying, for 17 days, to break that culture."

"What I am telling the athletes is, 'Don't run over and grab a flag and take it round

the track with you.' It's not business as usual for American athletes. If a Kenyan or a Russian grabs their national flag and runs round the track or holds it high over their heads, it might not be viewed as confrontational. Where we are in the world right now, an American athlete doing that might be viewed in another manner."

Everyone has his own interpretation of what constitutes taunting or boasting. Frankly, it's just hard for me to see "using the flag as a prop or a piece of apparel" as taunting or boasting.

And, no matter how patriotic, it definitely is not something for which an athlete should risk dying.

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Al Shuford checks on Mark Armstrong's forearm at Lowe's Motor Speedway in Concord. Shuford works with Armstrong and his teammates at Joe Gibbs Racing, which fields NASCAR Nextel Cup teams Bobby Labonte and Tony Stewart.

PHOTO: WADE NASH



Trainer keeps NASCAR teams fit to go racing

Continued from page 1C

like Lee Petty and Fireball Roberts who used to race at the dirt track in Cleveland County where my dad was a guard at a correctional facility a half mile away. I would sit on the tower and listen to him' and these names coming over the loudspeaker."

Today's top race teams invest in fitness, which opened the door for trainers like Shuford to become entrenched in the sport. Although drivers face physical demands of heat and fatigue in the car, crew members acknowledge Shuford's role in keeping everyone

healthy.

"He brings a lot to the team," said Mark "Hollywood" Armstrong, front tire changer for Nextel Cup driver Bobby Labonte. "If you've got something that's bothering you, you can go to Al thinking it's something major and by the time he's finished it's minor."

While Shuford is prepared to treat injuries on race day, his aim is prevention. Preparation is the key, from making sure drivers and crew are properly hydrated to monitoring how tires are changed, the entire racing operation is under his scrutiny.

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"The biggest thing I do is see what they do wrong to prevent injury," Shuford said. "I worry about if a guy is not bending his hips or rotating to allow natural movement and use the flexibility and strength he has."

Much has changed in racing since Shuford started with Gibbs six years ago. Schedule expansion and multi-million dollar television deals have turned NASCAR into the nation's second largest sports entity behind the NFL. As a result, more emphasis is put on winning and keeping suc-

cessful operations together. That means keeping crews and drivers healthy enough to endure the 38-week season. Racing injuries, like other team sports, can disrupt a championship run by tenths of a second.

"The biggest thing (team owners) realize is that with ... the economic impact of racing, they're realizing the value of keeping everybody together instead of get somebody and retraining them," Shuford said. "If we can invest a little bit here and reap the results over here...the continuity is quite obvious."

Worthy, Stimart win Queen City golf title

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Otis Worthy and Dick Stimart won the Queen City Golf Tournament at Renaissance Park Golf Course.

Worthy and Stimart combined for a total of 135, two

shots better than Shawn Saunders and Darryl Watts and Phil Neely-Donald Littlejohn.

Alvin Thompson and Mike Wallace led the First Flight with a total of 140, while

James Williams and Dave Williams finished two strokes back. James Bolden and Francis Pendergrass were third at 142.

• Al Wimberly won the Capital City Golf Club

Tournament at Hillcrest Golf Course in Orangeburg, S.C.

Wimberly shot a combined score of 146, a shot better than Ed Johnson and three in front of Jerome Westley. Don Jenkins was fourth at 152.

Jones' lawyers on PR offensive

By Josh Dubow

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Marion Jones' legal team has gone on a public relations offensive, poking holes in the evidence U.S. doping officials are using to investigate the star sprinter and possibly ban her from the Olympics.

Jones' lawyers showed documents received from the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency to The Associated Press on Tuesday and explained why they believe there is no compelling evidence that Jones used steroids.

The documents, seized in a raid of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative last year, contain negative urine tests purportedly from Jones; a ledger of those test results; a calendar with the initials M.J. that investigators implied was a schedule for steroid use during 2001; and a check written from Jones' bank account to BALCO founder Victor Conte.

Conte was one of four men indicted earlier this year for involvement in an alleged steroid-distribution ring. Many top athletes, including Jones, who lives in the Raleigh area, and baseball slugger Barry Bonds, have been linked to Conte and BALCO, and testified before a federal grand jury last year.

A Senate committee obtained evidence from the grand jury and gave it to USADA in hopes of guaranteeing a drug-free U.S. Olympic team in Athens in August.

Jones' lawyers deny the documents were about Jones, who won five medals at the 2000 Olympics, and that any evidence falls far short of the "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard USADA says it will use to ban athletes from the Olympics without a positive drug test.

"They are using statements, documents, rumor and innuendo that can not be corroborated," said Jones' attorney, Rich Nichols. "To accuse and ban an icon of the Olympics in track and field, a Marion Jones, who has never tested positive in her career, it's un-

believable."

USADA director of legal affairs Travis Tygart would only say that Jones' team was given documents at Monday's meeting.

It was not clear if this was all of the evidence USADA has against Jones. But her lawyers said it matched what they saw in November and have no reason to believe that prosecutors or USADA was holding anything back.

The most incriminating evidence, if proven accurate, is the calendar that runs from March-August 2001 and has references to many track and field events during that season. It alleges to show a schedule of drug use with a note saying "start clear" on March 29.

Last summer, the "clear" was determined to be the substance tetrahydrogestrinone, or THG - which was at the center of the BALCO investigation.

Many of the dates have the letters C, E, G and I. The letter C appears to refer to THG, and The New York Times cited a government affidavit saying E could be the masking agent epitestosterone, G could be human growth hormone, and I could be insulinlike growth factor.

There were also references to Trevor, C.J. and Victor, which appear to be her former coach, Trevor Graham, her then-husband C.J. Hunter, and Conte.

But Jones' lawyers poked holes at the calendar evidence, saying that the M.J. could stand for anyone; the fonts for March and April were different now than in November; and that there were three pages for July, including two that had times that appeared to be from men in the 100 meters. The times were 9.84 seconds, 9.86 and 9.97, which are all more than a half-second better than the women's record of 10.49.

The drug tests, which were also obtained from a file with Jones' name on it at BALCO's offices in Burlingame, have no names on them and only ID numbers, which are different for each one. Jones' lawyers said she never gave a urine sample at BALCO and provided plane tickets to show she was out of the country on two of the three dates.

All of the samples, which were tested by Quest Diagnostics, were negative for steroids.

Honda's Pilot sails along with gadgets, amenities

WINFRED B. CROSS

Test Drive



What makes Honda's Pilot so good? Honda.

That may sound to simplistic but it's the truth. When Honda sets its sights on something, it strives to make the best. The Pilot isn't the best, but aiming that high makes it better than most overall.

No, it's not a good-looking vehicle - most trucks aren't. Its looks are serviceable. It neither offends nor delights. It's like that prom date that has lots of charm and personality and inner beauty.

True to form, the Pilot is better on the inside. The EX-LRES is filled to the brim with standard equipment. Leather covered the comfortable seats. According to Honda, those seats hold eight people. Maybe if there are small children on the third-row bench that's possible. Adults may find the space tight.

The rest of the interior is done with Honda flair. Materials are high quality and work with a silky feel. The dash is OK, but not up

to Honda's flashy interior triumphs. The gauges are big and easy to read.

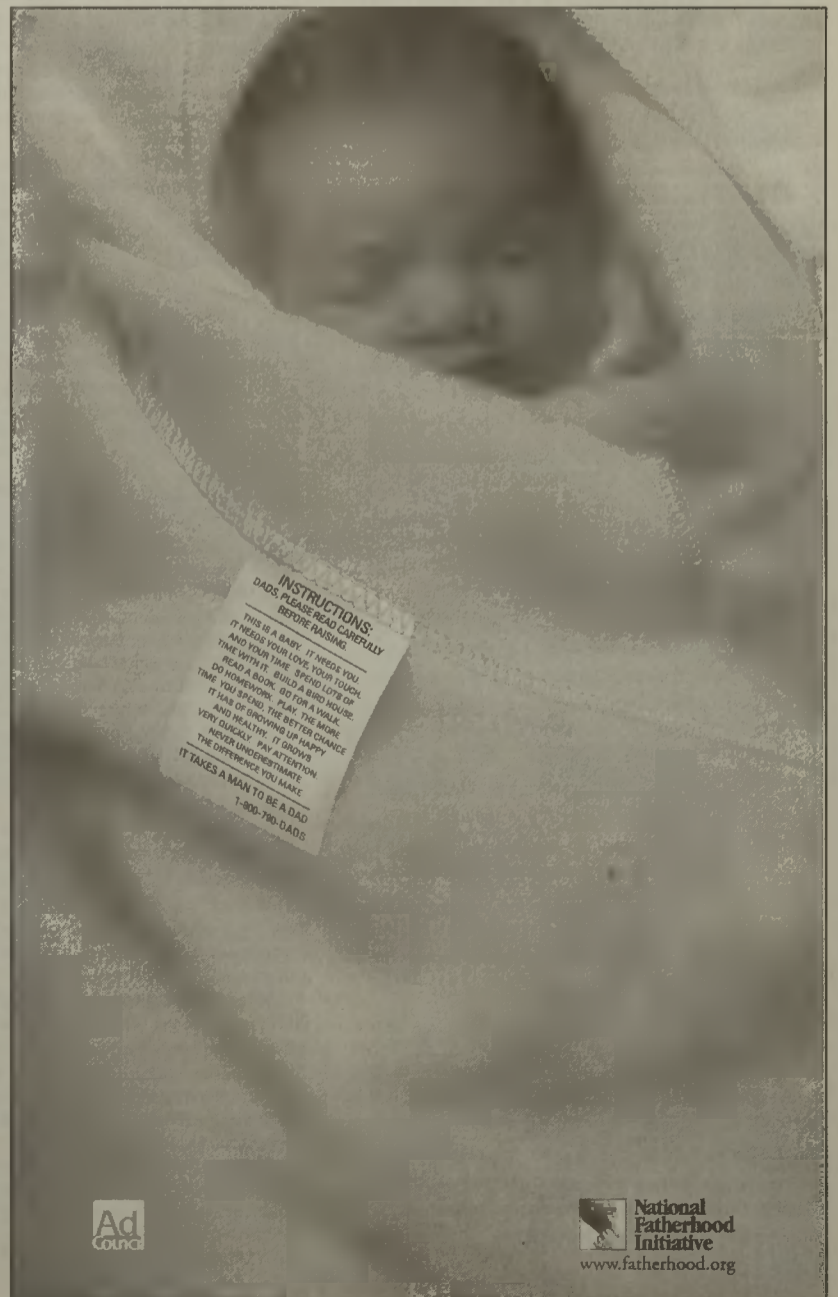
There is no shortage of stuff. Windows, door locks, mirrors and the driver's seat are power operated. The mirrors as well as the front seats are heated. My favorite gizmo is the rear seat DVD system. The sound isn't 5.1 digital but its crisp. The widescreen format screen displays brilliant colors and has a sharp picture.

For those who like a bit of oomph in their vehicle, the 3.5-liter engine has 240 horses that move it with a bit gusto. It's a smooth engine attached to a five-speed automatic transmission that never hunts for a gear. And if you need more grip, the push-button four-wheel drive system works like a champ.

Problems? None. Gripes? A few. This thing could look better, offer the fabulous DVD-audio system from Acura's TL and a reworked dash. Those changes would probably bump the reasonable \$32,830 price tag a bit, but such changes would make a great vehicle greater. As is, the Pilot has to be considered when buying a truck that's going to be used primarily for as a station wagon. Did you doubt this thing would be good?



Jones



Ad Council

National Fatherhood Initiative
www.fatherhood.org