

# African nations will be very competitive in Seoul

By JERRY GRAY  
Associated Press Writer

With the re-emergence of Kenya as a world track power, Africa's hopes for a haul of medals at the Seoul Olympics are golden.

And Iran's lucky draw in soccer gives the Middle East an unexpected chance at Olympic glory.

Even the absence of three gold medal prospects from Kenya and Ethiopia's boycott of the Seoul Games in sympathy with North Korea has not tarnished Africa's chances for unprecedented success.

Billy Konchellah, the World Games 800-meter champion, was a no-show at Kenya's Olympic trials in August. And World Games 10,000-meter titleholder Paul Kipkoech quit midway through his qualifying run because of poor conditioning.

Julius Korir, who brought home Kenya's only gold medal from the 1984 Los Angeles Games in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, did not make this year's tryouts because of a painful leg injury.

Nevertheless, Kenya is poised to sweep all the medals in the steeplechase with James Kariuki, Peter Koech and Patrick Sang, currently ranked first, second and

third in the world.

Africans also find themselves the favorites in the marathon with the rising stardom of Kenyan Ibrahim Hussein. He won the 1987 New York City Marathon and added victories in Honolulu and at the Boston Marathon in April.

"I am now king of the road and unbeatable over 26 miles and 385 yards," the Kenyan boasted on a recent trip home.

Hussein turned to marathon running after failing to make Kenya's 1984 steeplechase team. Since then, he has won five of the seven races he's entered, all against world-class competition.

The 30-year-old star is an economics graduate from the University of New Mexico, where he now lives and trains.

At last year's World Games in Rome, Kenya found another track gem in unheralded Douglas Wakihuri, who surprised a world-class field in the marathon.

Africa could easily dominate the Olympic marathon even without world record-holder Belayneh Dinsamo of Ethiopia. He became the world's fastest marathoner in April when he sailed to victory in the Rotterdam marathon in 2 hours, 6 minutes, 50 seconds.

Ethiopia is the only African country boycotting the Seoul Games. It took that stance even though the Marxist country's chief ally, the Soviet Union, decided to participate.

Djibouti sends former world marathon champion Ahmed Saleh into the fray and Tanzania will have Juma Ikaanga, who finished on Hussein's heels in Boston.

Somalia boasts the world's 1,500-meter champion, Adbi Bile.

But Morocco holds claims to one of the continent's premier athletes, Said Aouita.

Africa won three gold medals in 1984, and Aouita had two of them home, the 800 and 5,000 meter races.

Athletes from the Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Egypt won silver medals at Los Angeles and the continent collected nine bronze medals.

In judo, Egyptian Aly Rashwan has improved on the form which made him a surprise silver medalist in the over-100 kilogram judo competition. He has followed up with silver medals at the World Judo Championships in 1985 and 1987, brought home two gold medals from the Mediterranean Games of 1987 and repeated the feat at last year's All-Africa

Games in Nairobi.

The Middle East's Olympic hopes lies with Israel and Iraq.

Amos Mansdorf, an aggressive but temperamental tennis ace, goes to Seoul with 12 years of experience and ranked 25th in the world.

In the past few months, Mansdorf, 22, has won a Nabisco Grand Prix tournament in Israel, reached the final in Vienna, the semifinals in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the quarterfinals in Paris.

Iraq finds itself a most unlikely contender in soccer, where they have a good chance to reach the quarterfinals.

The Iraqis are the class in their grouping, which includes Italy, Guatemala and Zambia.

Mexico, which was the favorite in the group, won't be at Seoul. FIFA, soccer's governing body, banned Mexico from all competition for two years after the Mexicans entered over-age players in a world under-21 tournament.

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## Bengals release Larry Kinnebrew

CINCINNATI (AP) -- The Cincinnati Bengals released their NFL rights Monday to veteran running back Larry Kinnebrew who played collegiately at Tennessee State.

The move allows any other team to sign him without compensating Cincinnati.

"We're ready to start the season, we're happy with the people we have, and we want to get started without this kind of thing hanging over us," said assistant general manager Mike Brown, who withdrew the contract offer to Kinnebrew.

Kinnebrew's agent, Steve Zucker, asked the Bengals to release Kinnebrew in July. The delay in getting the release didn't appear to bother Kinnebrew.

"That's good news," the sixth-year NFL veteran said. "I'm ready to go and play for any other team

that needs me. I'm ready to do a good job."

The Bengals could have signed Kinnebrew on Monday for their original offer of \$750,000 over three years. Kinnebrew had said he was ready to end his seven-week holdout and accept the terms.

"I can't say I'm happy at all about this, but I have no other choice," Kinnebrew had said. "Football is my life, and I've got to get in there and do what I do best. ... I'm not in as good a shape as I could be, but I'm in shape to play football."

Brown said last week the club was "under no obligation" to continue the offer. The Bengals put a deadline on the offer, and Kinnebrew let it pass early last week, contrary to the recommendation of his agent, Steve Zucker.

Kinnebrew, 28, has been the

Bengals' most consistent rusher under coach Sam Wyche.

He scored eight touchdowns last season, and no other Bengal scored more than three.

He ranks sixth on the Bengals' all-time rushing list with 2,587 yards, but he would have needed only 484 yards this season to move into second place ahead of Charles Alexander (2,635), Archie Griffin (2,808), Boobie Clark (2,978) and Essex Johnson (3,070).

Pete Johnson, another over-weight fullback, is the club leader with 5,421 yards.

Brown has said the Bengals did not choose to release their veteran free agents any earlier because they were "insurance" for the possibility of injuries to other players, and because there was still hope for the Bengals to make a trade and get something in return.

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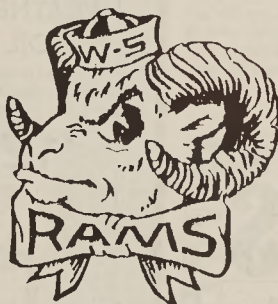
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