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## El Guerrouj and Holmes stride into Olympic history

By Gideon Long

ATHENS, Aug 28 (Reuters) - Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj and Briton Kelly Holmes gave the Athens Games two of its greatest moments on Saturday by surging to victory on the athletics track and claim historic Olympic doubles.

El Guerrouj won the men's 5,000 metres to add to his 1,500 metres title, emulating the achievement of Finland's Paavo Nurmi way back in 1924.

"I had a message from a friend today saying that in 1997 Athens discovered a prince and now it would pay homage to a king," El Guerrouj said, referring to the first of his 1,500 metres world titles won in Greece seven years ago.

"This stayed with me. When I woke up today I said to myself: 'This is going to be my day'."

El Guerrouj's win decided one of the greatest head-to-heads of the Games - a titanic tussle with Kenenisa Bekele who had been hoping to complete a double of his own by adding the 5,000 metres title to his 10,000 crown.

The Ethiopian had to settle for silver and 19-year-old world champion Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya took bronze.

Holmes became only the third woman in history to win both the 800 and 1,500 metres at the same Olympics, producing a masterful run over the longer distance to take gold.

"I am just gobsmacked," Holmes said. "I was trying to place myself in the right position when I needed to. I was holding on for dear life, I could see them coming. The whole experience has just been amazing."

In the biggest upset of the night, Britain grabbed another gold by upstaging the United States in the 4x100 metres relay.

The Americans ran without world 200 metres champion John Capel, who was dropped by his coach after testing positive for marijuana, and lost by the thickness of an athletics vest.

Normal service was resumed in the night's other two relays - the 4x400 metres races - which the American men and women won by a country mile.

Those relay successes helped the U.S. hit the 100 medal mark just a day before the Games end. Russia are second on 84 followed by China on 62.

The gold medal tally is closer though. The Americans lead with 34, three ahead of China. Russia are third with 23 and Australia fourth on 17.

After 52 years without an Olympic gold medal, Argentina won two on the same day.

Following their victory over Paraguay in the soccer final earlier, the Argentines beat Italy 84-69 in the men's basketball final, sparking jubilant celebrations at courtside.

"It's an amazing feeling. It's unbelievable. After 52 years without a gold medal for Argentina, we get two in a day," said Argentina basketball player Manu Ginobili.

"I want to cry and at the same time to laugh. I can't wait go back to Argentina and see the joy in the face of our people."

The U.S. men beat Lithuania to take bronze but only after a mix-up over kit with both teams turning up dressed in white.

The multi-million-dollar team of U.S. NBA professionals ordered blue replacements and when the match finally started the Americans won 104-96.

China became the new women's volleyball champions after beating Russia in the final while Cuba, the team they deposed, edged out Brazil to take the bronze.

Cuba's plan to win seven boxing gold medals was thwarted by Thailand's Manus Boonjumnong, who won the light-welterweight final. The Cubans had hoped to match their record magnificent seven from the 1992 Games.

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge came under attack for his role in a doping scandal involving Greece's top two sprinters which has rumbled on throughout the Games.

A top Greek athletics official said Rogge had stepped out of line when he asked about the whereabouts of sprinters Costas Kenteris and Katerina Thanou hours before they missed drugs tests on the eve of the Olympics.

In the latest doping incident of the Olympics, Puerto Rican wrestler Mabel Fonseca was excluded from the Games after testing positive for the banned steroid stanozolol.

The IOC also said it was still trying to locate Hungarian Olympic hammer champion Adrian Annus, who is suspected of having tampered with his doping sample before slipping off home to Hungary where he promptly retired.

The 28th Olympic Games end on Sunday when the final event, the men's marathon, will trace the route supposedly taken by Phidippides from the village of Marathon in 490 BC to announce victory by Athens over Persia.

On Sunday night, Athens will host the closing ceremony and the Olympic flame will be extinguished for another four years.

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