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## **AFTEREFFECTS: REIGN OF TERROR; Soccer Players Describe Torture by Hussein's Son**

By JOHN F. BURNS

It was little surprise that Habib Jaafer, star midfielder of the Iraqi national soccer team for the past 17 years, stiffened as he approached the National Olympic Committee.

He had come to point out the scenes of his humiliations by the man every Iraqi still refers to simply as "Mr. Uday" -- Saddam Hussein's eldest son.

Mr. Jaafer, 36, is a small, wiry man, and by his own profession a bantam in defending himself, on or off the field. That, fellow players on the national squad said, made him Uday's preferred target for punishment whenever the team failed to win.

The Olympic committee headquarters, near the Canal Expressway on the eastern side of Baghdad, is a burned-out shell now, its torture chambers in the basement flooded with water, every floor a wasteland of charred furniture and twisted steel. Out front, the gold-painted statue of Saddam Hussein lies prone on the ground. Its head was cut off with axes and carried away.

Nothing could more perfectly represent the end of Mr. Hussein's rule, and the loathing for his son. But Mr. Jaafer, the midfielder, paused at the gateway, reluctant to enter.

"Just coming to this gate fills me with fear," he said. "So often, when I came here, I knew that days of punishment lay ahead."

Told that he had no reason to fear Uday any longer, Mr. Jaafer demurred. "You say he's gone, but can you tell me where he is?" he said. "Can you be certain he will not come back? As long as Saddam Hussein and his sons are still alive, they are dangerous."

His fear is understandable. This building was equipped with torture contraptions that included a sarcophagus, with long nails pointing inward from every surface, including the lid, so victims could be punctured and suffocated.

Another device, witnesses said, was a metal framework designed to clamp over a prisoner's body, with footrests at the bottom, rings at the shoulders and attachment points for power cables, so the victim could be hoisted and subjected to electric shocks.

After the Olympic building burned, reporters visiting the ruins found the sarcophagus with nails abandoned out back, as if dragged there by the looters who emptied the building of its furniture before it burned.

The metal framework used for administering electric shocks turned up two weeks later at Al Hekmah mosque in Saddam City, the Baghdad neighborhood now renamed Al-Sadr City, where Muslim clerics said it had been taken by looters who had removed it from the Olympic building. The framework is now a display item at the mosque, symbolizing the repression of Iraqi Shiites by Saddam Hussein.

Tramping through the ruins of the Olympic building, one finds charred letters to Uday from senior officials of the International Olympic Committee, including Juan Antonio Samaranch, the Spaniard who was long its president.

They show no trace of any effort by the international committee's headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, to distance itself from the Iraqi committee and its head, despite years of reports by Western human rights organizations that the Baghdad building was being used for torture and killing.

Right up to the Winter Games in Salt Lake City last year, the correspondence from Lausanne was about the need for Iraq, like other countries, to prepare for the new "disciplines," like the women's bobsled competition, being introduced at the Utah Games.

One letter, from the International Olympic Committee's Fair Play Commission, spoke of the "universal humanistic sports values" of the Olympic movement; another of the "global society" that would be represented by the Olympic Village at Salt Lake City.

As president of Iraq's Olympic committee, the president's son was the country's sports czar. According to several accounts from players, he turned his sadistic obsessions on the national soccer team.

After drawing or losing games, players were punished. A missed penalty or other poor play entailed a ritual head shaving at the Stadium of the People, or being spat on by Uday's bodyguards.

A series of poor passes, carefully counted, could result in a player's being forced to stand before the president's son in the dressing room, hands at his side, while he was punched or slapped in the face an equal number of times.

But those were the lesser miseries. Some players endured long periods in a military prison, beaten on their backs with electric cables until blood flowed. Other punishments included "matches" kicking concrete balls around the prison yard in 130-degree heat, and 12-hour sessions of push-ups, sprints and other fitness drills, wearing heavy military fatigues and boots.

The story of the 38-year-old Uday, whose whereabouts are unknown, is only part of the horrors that tumble every day now out of American-ruled Iraq. It is a story that exceeds the worst that human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch chronicled in the years before American troops toppled Mr. Hussein's government last month.

Those reports suggested that the victims of Mr. Hussein's terror, over 24 years, ran into the thousands, perhaps tens of thousands. On the basis of the horrors now being disclosed, many Iraqis fear that the figure may run much higher still.

The role of Uday is likely to receive special attention. His brutality, as recounted by people who watched him at close quarters over the years, was of a particular kind.

His father used murder on a mass scale as a political tool, to create the fear that discouraged challenges to his power. Uday appears to have inflicted pain and death mostly for pleasure.

Many Iraqis believe that it was Uday's excesses, including shooting dead one of Saddam Hussein's bodyguards, that caused his father to sideline him as his political heir in the late 1990's in favor of his cooler but equally deadly younger brother, Qusay.

All three men, if still alive, are fugitives now, hunted by vigilante groups that have formed among the relatives of the men they killed and sought by American Special Operations teams that watch safe houses in Baghdad neighborhoods with pockets of support for Saddam Hussein.

By any realistic measure, the family's power is finished. Uday, survivor of an assassination attempt while driving his Porsche through Baghdad in 1996, is said by members of the national soccer team to be so disabled that he shuffles when he walks.

But as long as the father and the sons remain uncaptured -- or not proved to be dead -- they will continue to cast a shadow because of the fear they once instilled.

Many soccer players seem to have been punished in part because they were Shiite Muslims living under a government dominated by Sunni Muslims. It was from refuse-strewn back alleys of what used to be called Saddam City, a Shiite area, that many of Iraq's best players came.

Emmanuel Baba Dano, known throughout Iraq as Amu Baba, the Pelé of Iraqi soccer, served as the national coach for most of the last three decades. He said he had argued with Uday repeatedly over team selections, with the president's son favoring less talented players who were from the same Sunni minority in Iraq as the Husseins over the talented young Shiites from Saddam City.

"I told him, 'If you want oil, you go to an oilfield,' " Mr. Dano said. " 'In soccer, our oilfield is Saddam City.' "

Such comments would provoke threats to extract Mr. Dano's tongue. From a member of the Hussein family, it was no idle threat.

After hours listening to Mr. Jaafer and other members of the soccer team describe the humiliations they suffered under Uday, the question persisted: why?

Why would a man in his 20's and 30's so cosseted that he had his own palaces, a fleet of Rolls-Royces, Ferraris and Porsches, a yacht on the Tigris and, until the 1996 bid to kill him, the opportunity to roam the world as an honored Olympic figure, turn to torture and murder?

It is a question for psychiatrists, but Mr. Dano hinted at a partial answer when he spoke of Uday's insistent quest for love and adoration from Iraqis, and his fury when it was denied him.

"When we won a game," Mr. Dano said, "he would turn to me like a child and say: 'See how the people of Baghdad fire in the air when we win? They love me so much.'

"But if we drove anywhere together where there was a crowd, I would slump down in my seat, because the people used to cheer me, not him. And then he would threaten to have me killed."

**Correction:** May 7, 2003, Wednesday A picture in some editions yesterday with an article about torture that was used by Uday Hussein against members of Iraq's national soccer team carried an incorrect credit. The picture, of a man pointing to a metal framework that could be clamped over a human body to enable electrical shocks, was by Craig S. Smith of The New York Times; in earlier editions, a picture of a man standing to the right of the metal form was by Farah Nosh for The Times.