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2008 Olympic Games Beijing, China

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publisher's note

Coaching is an art. One can, I believe, learn about the science, but the act of motivating athletes, of giving them the confidence to focus on the race at hand, is an art. This has been made apparent to me several times over the past two years. It was a lesson that I had learned years ago, but forgotten.

In April of 2008, I was at a product summit in Portland, Oregon. The two days had been long, and as we went to the swimming complex on the Nike campus, I spotted Alberto Salazar and several of his athletes. In the group was Galen Rupp, Adam Goucher, Kara Goucher and Amy Yoder Begley.

Alberto and I have known each other for over two decades—he was always quite kind to me on his visits to old *Runners' World* when I worked there, and we've kept in touch. I asked if I could watch the workout and Alberto was kind enough to say yes.

It was a five-mile threshold run. Kara and Amy were running 5:10 pace on a soccer pitch, which meant running over long, wet grass. It was tough, it was focused, it was preparation for what was coming later in the year. Kara was not really happy with the workout and said so. I noticed Alberto allowed himself just a bit of a smile.

I mentioned that it might be good for her, and keep her out of trouble this early in the season.

Adam and Galen did their 8k in about 4:40 a mile and they floated. To be more precise, Galen floated; Adam churned. Adam Goucher is not one to float; he runs through the air and the grass around him, and his presence is commanding.

At the trials, Kara and Amy made the 10,000-meter team, and Kara came back and won the 5,000 meters. Galen made the 10,000-meter team, and Adam, who had been injured much of the spring, made a gallant attempt in the men's 10,000, finishing sixth.

Kara once told a group of writers that her coach, Alberto, made her feel that she had done all she could to make the team. She was ready to race. What Alberto has done for his athletes is amazing. He gave them the gift of confidence.

I worked as an assistant coach at Bellarmine College Prep in San Jose, CA for five years under the watchful eyes of Terry Ward. Terry, a former athlete of some stature, was the man who gave me confidence about my ability to coach, and through the years, has helped me when I was down. The thirty plus years he spent at Bellarmine, preceded by the decade at St. Ignatius Prep in San Francisco, changed the lives of several generations of young men. His wit, his style, his ability to give confidence to athletes will be sorely missed. His coaching was a gift that he gave to many of us who had the privilege to work with him.

Alberto Salazar and Terry Ward probably never met, but they have much in common. They live for their athletes, they dream for their athletes, and they inspire their athletes. Whether at the Oregon Project, or on a light blue track in San Jose, California, they represent more than 30,000 coaches, who are engaged in a sacred trust—showing our sons and daughters how to expand their limits, how to live a healthy life, and what is really important in the short time we have on this planet.



Larry Eder, Publisher



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- **USATF-SANCTIONED INDOOR COMPETITONS** in the shot put and weight throw will be held on Sunday afternoon.



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Starting Blocks *by Dick Patrick of USA Today*



Shalane Flanagan

USA Track & Field's new CEO, Doug Logan, who has been given the job of drastically streamlining the organization's board of directors by the U.S. Olympic Committee, has also pledged to evaluate the elite side of the sport after what he called a "mixed" performance in Beijing.

While the U.S. did keep its customary leading position in the medals table, the total of 23 medals—7 Gold, 9 Silver, 7 Bronze—was the lowest since '96. The 7 Gold medals were the lowest U.S. total since '76.

Also of concern: both 4x100 relay teams dropping batons in qualifying races, and the lack of finalists in field events. There were no U.S. men in the final of the long jump for the first time in Olympic history—and also no finalists in the men's high jump, triple jump, discus, hammer or javelin.

In a recent blog, Logan wrote of his disappointment that only 10.6% of the men and 16.9% of the women achieved their seasonal peaks in Beijing: "I have come to the conclusion, as an organization, USATF is seriously deficient if judged by the mandate of our own charter."

The question is: What went wrong in the six weeks between Eugene and Beijing?

Logan has already gotten an earful from John Cook, who coached three women to Olympic team berths and a medal in Beijing. Cook's biggest success was Shalane Flanagan, who this year set two U.S. records at 10,000, including a 3rd-place in Beijing that came after her appearance in the race was doubtful because of severe gastro-intestinal problems.

Cook was critical of the pre-meet training camp in Dalian, which he said was billed as "the Riviera of China" but that he found to be anything but. He blamed the food at the training center as the cause of Flanagan's illness, "The food was terrible. The accommodations were terrible. The place was dirty. We

had other kids getting sick."

Cook said the hilly terrain and lack of trails rather than pavement handicapped middle-distance and distance runners. "I'm convinced we left a Bronze medal there," he said, referring to his runner Shannon Rowbury, who took 7th in Beijing but later ran impressive times in the 1500 and mile in Europe.

The practice track and weight training facilities were also criticized by Cook and others. One coach told *American Track & Field*, "The practice track was a 30-minute bus ride away, and you could only train 9 a.m. till noon or 4 to 7 p.m. We were told this was for security reasons; they closed off the road completely when the buses were running. And once you were there you couldn't leave until the bus left; so if you had an hour workout, you had to sit around in the heat, humidity and bugs for two hours.

"It got cool at night," he adds, "and the stadium had lights, and that would have been a good time to work out for runners, and for field eventers whose Olympic finals were at night."

The weight facility was another bus ride from the hotel, in a different direction. In the words of one coach, "The bars were bent and rusted; the weights were not only rusted, but they were scattered around and you had to hunt them up in corners. There was a lot of mold and mildew—the place probably hadn't been cleaned since it opened."

According to Jill Geer of USATF, the hotel originally selected by USATF officials—close to the training track—was changed in March by the Chinese: "They said it was for security reasons. That made a lot of logistical rearrangements necessary in a short time."

That may have been the cause of a lot of the training venue problems. But Cook feels that there is an organizational problem, too.

"The fact that the head coaches

starting blocks

decided to keep the team together was an antiquated and old-time approach,” Cook said. “College coaches like team spirit, I am willing to say. But the reality is that shot putters could care less what the marathoners are doing.

“The concept of a team camp is stupid and ill-designed unless the venue can guarantee training trails and places for distance runners to have recovery runs.”

Cook also believes the structure of the coaching staff is obsolete, with a head coach and assistants in different areas, sprints, throws, distances, etc.

“These people are not familiar with the training methodology of the various athletes, who in all cases have personal coaches. I recommend team managers, no head coach, no assistant coaches. Free up credentials for personal coaches.

“These may be strong words, but the Olympic coaches get in the way. They simply take up space. It’s a ceremonial title. We will not succeed against a motivated track and field world unless we have the courage to retool.”

Another problem: credentials for personal coaches

Coaches’ access was also a sore point. Personal coaches need access to training facilities to be able to work with their athletes. The IAAF recognized this: At the World Championships countries can obtain passes for personal coaches that are transferable.

But the Olympics are a different story. Only a dozen or so American coaches got passes that allowed them into the warm-up track in Beijing. If not, personal coaches—and their athletes—were out of luck. The coaches were also expected to purchase tickets to enter the stadium when their athletes were competing, although many were given tickets by shoe companies.

Frank Gagliano, who had four 800 runners on the team—all three men plus Nicole Teter—was reduced to standing on a cinder block and trying to look over a canvas on the fence to the warm-up track to communicate with his athletes.

Gagliano’s complaint: The criteria for merit-ing a pass were not spelled out in advance.

“Does an Olympic champ get one?” asked Gagliano, who took Nick

Symmonds to the 800 title at the Olympic Trials. “A guy wins the Olympic Trials and he can’t get on the track with his coach? It’s not only me. It’s other people. This needs to be revisited.

“Without coaches there would be no sport. Coaches are important in the development of an athlete. Crucial. We’re out there every single day with these athletes. You can’t let the athlete go to the Olympic Games without you being around.”

According to a coach who wanted anonymity, the U.S. had more personal passes than any country. Unlike at the Worlds, the passes were not transferable: “The problem is the IOC and the (local organizing committee). They don’t care. They think athletes should be independent enough not to have individual coaches.”

The IAAF should use its influence to change the rules and allow coaches access as they do at World Championships. So should USATF and the USOC. It’s a win-win situation. Athletes would perform better and the sport would get more attention.

Continued on page 10

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Johnson leaves USATF

A month after the Beijing Olympics, veteran coach Brooks Johnson resigned his position of chairman of the High Performance Division of USATF. In charge of USA relays teams since 2003, Johnson said the decision had “nothing to do with (baton) exchanges or criticisms.”

Both the men’s and women’s 4x100 meter relays dropped batons on the final exchange in qualifying at the Beijing Olympics before both 4x400s won Gold. Johnson said his decision was a result of his coaching foreign athletes and consulting for other countries “that are a conflict of interest” with his former job that carried a \$105,000 salary.

Johnson’s take on the relay debacle, which came a year after the U.S. took all

four relays at the ’07 World Championships: “It’s amazing how fast you can go from a genius to an idiot. I could show you CDs from every practice we had. Athletes had baton passed to them and handed them off. They had to go up and down the line 10 times. Then they jogged to get the exchange mechanism down.

“I think people need to come in and look at the (relay situation). Maybe there was something we missed. I don’t think so because the thing that went wrong both times was the pass was in the hand of the outgoing athlete with the lead. That’s all a coach can do. Somewhere along the line, someone has to grasp it and go.”

New venture for Pfaff

Dan Pfaff, who coached six athletes on the U.S. team in Beijing, has taken a new job as head of the USOC training center in Chula Vista, Calif.

Pfaff, who is generally acknowledged to be one of the world’s best track and field coaches, has coached seven Olympic medalists including Donovan Bailey of Canada, the 1996 100-meter champion who set a world record in that Athens final. He has also coached NCAA champions in every field event and every track event from 100 meters to 5000 meters. His versatility and deep commitment to the athletes he coaches should be a welcome addition to the USOC’s training leadership.

Policing and promoting conflict

When Usain Bolt was criticized by International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge for post-race celebrations after winning the 100, 200 and being part of the victorious 4x100 relay for Jamaica, IAAF president Lamine Diack jumped to the splendid sprinter’s defense.

“He is good and great for our sport. He can help to build up our sport,” Diack said.

It was appropriate that IOC member Diack should voice support for Bolt. The incident, however, points to a fundamental flaw in drug testing. There’s an inherent conflict of interest when an organization like the IAAF, in charge of promoting its sport, also conducts drug testing. What if Bolt were to test positive for a performance-enhancing drug in a test administered by the IAAF? Might the organization be tempted to suppress the bad news that could greatly damage the sport?

USATF faced the same conflict of interest from the 1980s until 2002, and cleared it up by ceding its drug-testing duties to USADA, an independent organization.

Ever since Bolt set his first world record in the 100 in May, he has dealt with questions about performance-enhancing drug use, which he has denied while managing to stay pleasant. As Bolt has said many times, he demon-

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strated talent at an early age—he was the youngest world junior champ, in the 200, at 15—and that his progression is not suspicious.

Of course, Marion Jones used similar reasoning for years. It would help matters if there were more rigorous testing, focusing on the off-season, conducted by an independent agency such as the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Victor Conte, the mastermind of the BALCO steroid scandal, says he told then-WADA president Dick Pound in December 2007, about a Caribbean drug ring supplying sprinters:

“I advised Dick Pound to routinely send drug testers to Jamaica in disguise and to start doing so immediately. I had received information about a specific drug supplier—Pound received this person’s name, address and phone number—who was allegedly working with elite track athletes. However, Pound stepped down as the chairman of WADA just two weeks after our meeting. It now

appears as though others working with WADA who actually do investigations and provide drug testing have failed to act upon the information.”

The IAAF and the new Jamaican drug testing organization claim Jamaican athletes are tested often. Conte counters those claims are misleading.

“The overwhelming majority of out-of-competition tests are performed on samples collected by the IAAF during the season between competitions while the athletes are competing on the European track circuit. This significantly reduces the cost per sample of the tests. However, it is not effective because it is basically the same as ‘in-competition’ drug testing.”

Conte adds, “This is simply more propaganda by the IAAF and Jamaica regarding the effectiveness of the IAAF’s drug testing. The testing is still inept regardless of what they claim. What is needed is much more ‘off-season’ drug testing and less inaccurate claims about the effective-

ness of ‘in-between’ testing, which is what they call ‘out-of-competition’ testing. The bottom line is that the current ‘out-of-competition’ testing is ineffective and there is still a tremendous need for change. It’s my opinion that more effective drug testing in the Caribbean will help to restore the credibility of the entire sport of track and field.”

Ryan Hall enters Boston

Ryan Hall, who in two years as a marathoner has become the No. 2 American ever, has entered next April’s Boston Marathon. Hall, 10th in Beijing, ran his first two 26.22 milers in London, PRing in 2:06:17 in 2008 over the flat course. Boston has plenty of hills, and tradition.

Hall, well aware that the last U.S. winner at Boston was Greg Meyer in 1983, said, “To win here would mean as much to me as winning any marathon in the world, including the Olympic Games. (It) would show the world that American

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distance running is indeed back to the days of Salazar, Beardsley, and Rodgers. I hope I can contribute to bringing American marathoning back to the forefront. There's no better place to do that than Boston. What's done in Boston lives on for all time."

Bell lap

The sport lost two of its very best people to cancer in November:

- Larry James, known as The Mighty Burner during his days as a top Villanova quartermiler, died on November 6, his 61st birthday. James was second in the 400 and was a member of the world record setting 4x400 relay at the 1968 Olympics. The athletic director at Stockton College, he remained active in USATF affairs and participated in a teleconference about USATF budget matters the day before his death.
- C. Harmon Brown, a physician, professor, pioneer in sports medicine and sports science, coach and USATF official, died at 78. A hurdler at Lafayette College, Brown maintained a life-long involvement in the sport, including coaching throwers from the youth to world-class levels. He was an early booster of women participating in sports. In 1978 he was quoted in Time magazine: "Four years ago it was not O.K. for girls to participate in sports, and they were forced to be sedentary. Now it's suddenly O.K., but teachers are not equipped to show girls how to gradually improve their physical fitness and cut down on injuries."
- Ever wonder, as Usain Bolt was setting world records in the 100 (9.69) and 200



Courtesy of Richard Stockton College



(19.30) at the Olympics, how much ground the 6-5 Jamaican covers per stride? The answer is almost nine feet. According to the international track federation, Bolt took 37 strides in the final half of the 200. That works out to an average of 8 feet, 10-3/8 inches.

- LaShawn Merritt, who won Olympic Gold medals in the 400 and 4x400, was honored with a parade and the key to Portsmouth, VA, in September. "I asked the mayor what kind of perks came with the key," Merritt joked. "Did that mean I didn't have to wait in traffic? Could he take care of any traffic tickets?"
- Shalane Flanagan, the Olympic 10,000 Bronze medalist, also had a parade, in Marblehead, MA. The only problem: it rained. "It's not often you can say it literally rained on your parade," Flanagan said. "But I had a great time."
- Robert Weir, who competed in three Olympics for Great Britain and was a coach in the U.S., including a stint at Stanford, is returning to his hometown of Birmingham, England, to become heavy throws coach for Britain leading to the 2012 Games in London. Weir, 47, who won Commonwealth Games titles in the discus and hammer, doesn't inherit a stacked cupboard. The Brits had only two entrants, both women, in the heavy throws in Beijing and neither made the final. "This is an amazing opportunity and challenge," Weir said.
- Tim Montgomery, 33, who once held the world record in the 100 meters though the performance was later nullified by admitted drug use, is scheduled to serve nine years in prison. Montgomery got four years for his role in a counterfeit check scheme; he was sentenced to five years for distributing heroin. The judge sentencing him for the drug trafficking noted that Montgomery was not the first fast guy he'd sentenced. He also sentenced Andre Cason to six months for a counterfeit check charge in 1999. **AT&F**

SAUCONY [saw-kah-nee]

means once the gun goes off, you'll only see the back of my shoes.



Working with Design Pros

by Mary Helen Sprecher

Creating an outstanding new athletic facility is one of the most daunting jobs a coach or athletic director will ever tackle. It's complicated, it's time-consuming, and it's easy to make expensive mistakes. That's why, increasingly, schools and other institutions are turning to design professionals to help them transform ideas into reality.

So, what's the best approach to use when meeting with an architect, landscape architect, or engineer? Good preparation is the key, according to the professionals. Here, several of these pros offer some of their best advice for those ready to embark on a new athletic facility.

Define Your Needs: Find out exactly who will be using the facility, when, and for what sports. Talk with them, and take

plenty of notes. "How will the facility be used? Just for competitive games, or for everyday practice?" asks Ed Norton of Holcombe Partners in Birmingham, AL. He adds, "Athletic or facility directors should listen to the needs and wishes of all the sports utilizing the facility. For example, football coaches may want to use the space in the D-zones for offensive or defensive drills, while the track coach wants the area for field events. Soccer coaches want the widest field possible, which may restrict space for field events. If space is limited, there will have to be compromises."

Have a Plan: Jack Kamrath of Tennis Planning Consultants in Houston, TX, says, "In working with educational entities, especially colleges and universities, unquestionably the greatest need we

have seen since 1970 is for the facilities director and director of athletics to develop a logical, long-range master plan for each component of their athletic facilities," says Kamrath. "Time after time, no one at the institution understands the significance of stepping back and taking time to consider the needs of all sports, both men and women, in a single thought process."

Know Your Numbers: The experts agree that, all too often, prospective clients come to the table without a realistic idea of costs. "Budget, budget, budget," says Brett Long of Brett T. Long Landscape Architecture in South Lake Tahoe, CA. "Initially, most school superintendents and facilities directors are not aware of the costs of a new sports facility. Many have become interested in

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upgrading from a cinder track to synthetic or lawn fields to synthetics because of grant money or a donation which typically covers only a portion of these upgrades.”

Consider the Extras: Ed Norton advises his clients to look into all the things that can drive up costs. “Have maintenance costs been factored into the budget?” he asks. “Is new equipment needed? Is more labor required? Where will the equipment be stored? Is the facility to be lighted? Is there a concern with light spill into adjacent properties? What will be the target seating capacity of the grandstands?” All these things, he notes, should be made clear at the outset.

Know Your Land: Many clients know the size and location of the parcel of land for the new athletic facility, but are unaware of how much land the facility will actually take up. The good news, however, is that a design professional with experience in sports facilities can work with the client to suggest options and alternatives.

“Most school sports facilities are multi-use, which requires a designer who has experience and understands the rules and special requirements of multiple sports,” says Brett Long. “Facilities that include football, soccer, track and field and other events can vary greatly in shape and dimension. There’s no single template for multi-use fields, and a knowledgeable designer will work with the client to provide a facility that maximizes the space use at the highest competitive level possible.”

“Once the project starts, standard practice is for the client to provide geotechnical, survey, and program information,” says Tony Wood of the Beals Alliance, Inc., Sacramento, CA. “Once a design professional has been contracted, during the programming portion of the project, it is critical that the client provide sufficient time with the project stakeholders to insure that the project is being designed, and ultimately built, to meet their needs.”

Know You Have Choices: Don’t just flip open the Yellow Pages. Research the professionals who have sports facility-specific experience. “Seek the recommendations of peers with projects similar to yours,” says Tony Wood. “Don’t be afraid to ask them the hard questions.

Ask what they liked or disliked about the services they received and the facility they now have. Make sure their goals going into the project match yours. Some clients are focused on price, some on quality, and others on schedule. You want to be sure that whoever you select to work with has goals that are aligned with yours.”

Furthermore, says Wood, be thorough in your questioning. “Ask the design professional for examples of relevant experience and their role in the project. It is a common practice for some designers to include beautiful photos of projects that match the clients’ specific interest. They may have been ‘part’ of a team on the project, but the important question is ‘What part?’ As an example, they may have been responsible for the grading and drainage, while someone else was responsible for the rest of the project.”

Don’t Cheap Out Where It Counts: Sometimes, trying to save a few dollars can hurt more in the long run. Norton cautions, “The track base and pavement are not a place to cut corners. Often a school district will volunteer the local municipality to perform the paving to save money. A quality base and pavement are critical to a successful track. The surface is only as good as what is beneath it. The base and pavement should only be placed by a qualified company that has a strong history in track construction.”

Know Something About the Process: Take the time to become educated in choices about athletic facilities, including new trends in design, surfaces, amenities and accessories. Contact professional associations and get construction guidelines and publications (see “Note” below). An informed consumer makes smarter decisions. **AT&F**

Note: The American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) is a nonprofit association helping designers, builders, owners, operators and users understand quality sports facility construction. The ASBA sponsors informative meetings and publishes newsletters, books and technical construction guidelines for athletic facilities, including running tracks. Available at no charge is a listing of all publications offered by the Association, as well as the ASBA’s Membership Directory. Info: 866-501-ASBA (2722) or www.sportsbuilders.org.

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Olympic Games 2008: Event by Event

by Mel Watman and Peter Matthews

On August 16 Usain Bolt's win in the 100m provided *the* moment of the 2008 Olympic Games. "That was perfection," said Michael Johnson, also noting, "When has anyone ever shut down in an Olympic final." But better was to come four days later in the event that Bolt says is his "pride and joy," for as the great Johnson said after losing his 200m world record "The 100 meters was great, the 200m was absolutely fantastic." Who could believe that the amazing 19.32 run by MJ in Atlanta 1996 would ever be broken—now who can believe that Bolt will not go yet faster at both sprints, and quite possibly add the 400m one day as well. And finally Bolt ran superbly on the Jamaican team that smashed the world record for the sprint relay. Jesse Owens in 1936, Bobby Morrow in 1956 and Carl Lewis in 1984 had previously won Olympic sprint triple Gold, but even these all-time greats did not set three world records in so doing.

While "Lightning Bolt" was the top star of the Beijing Games, there were also marvellous distance doubles by the superb and still young Ethiopian talents Tirunesh Dibaba and Kenenisa Bekele. Dibaba had one slow and one fast win, but nobody had any answer to her speed of finish, and the same is true of Bekele, who set Olympic records in both races and who showed consummate tactical ability in the 5000m as he controlled the race throughout. The theme of terrific distance running was continued in the marathon, in which Samuel Wanjiru recorded a fantastic victory in easily the fastest time ever run in a major championship race.

Five world records at a Games is extraordinary these days (most since five in Seoul 1988, then go back to six in Moscow 1980)—and in addition to Bolt's three, two Russian women improved their own marks. The incomparable Yelena Isinbayeva vaulted 5.05 for WR number 24 and Gulnara Galkina front-ran her way to the first sub-9-minute steeplechase time. Clean sweeps of the medals were achieved in three events—USA men at 400m and 400m hurdles and Jamaica women at 100m—and winners were spread right across the ages from 18-year-old Pamela Jelimo to 38 year-old Constantina Tomescu. There were just five successful defending champions with Angelo Taylor regaining his Olympic 400m hurdles title.

The closing down of industries cleared the air so that pollution was much less of a problem than had been feared. In generally excellent conditions on a super-fast track Olympic records were set in ten men's and seven women's events compared to five each in 2004 and in many events we noted best-ever

marks for various places, testimony to great standards in depth. There were 2008 world-leading marks in 8 men's and 13 women's events. Of course, there were some weaker events—such as men's long jump and women's discus, but not many. One slightly disappointing point was, however, that many victories were very clear-cut and we did not have as many exciting finishes as, for instance, at the 2007 Worlds. The clash between Jeremy Wariner and LaShawn Merritt had been keenly anticipated but Merritt won by nearly a second and while the clear win by Dayron Robles was not surprising, it was nonetheless a huge disappointment that there could be no challenge from the Chinese superstar Liu Xiang.

Javelin throwers headed the throwing events as Andreas Thorkildsen broke the Olympic record in retaining his title and Barbora Spotáková produced a superb final effort to overtake the inspired Mariya Abakumova. That took her to second on the world all-time time list, a feat matched by Françoise Mbango in the women's triple jump.

The USA athletes were, as ever, the most successful—but only just as their seven Gold medals amounted only one more than Jamaica (who dominated the sprints to an extraordinary extent) and Russia and their points total (8 to 1 for 1st to 8th) was 207 to 200 for Russia. Next, Kenya doubled their points score and Jamaica increased their total substantially. The U.S. Goldtally was worse in Munich 1972 and Montreal 1976 (both six) but only at Sydney 2000 had their points total ever been lower. Many of their superstars delivered but so many of their team underperformed (not to mention their sprint relay disasters!) that one has to question their selection procedure. Their Olympic Trials is such a great and important meeting that all too many athletes were unable to raise their game again two months later when it should matter most.

When China was awarded the Games some fans said that we could expect Chinese athletes to fare exceptionally well, with top athletes being specially prepared over the years, but actually they did pretty dismally and even worse than results over the last few years would indicate.

The joyously enthusiastic crowds may have had few local heroes to urge on in the Bird's Nest Stadium but they had day after day of superb action from the world's super tars at a meeting that will live forever in our memories, whether the fortunate few who were there or the millions of us who watched on TV. As IOC president Jacques Rogge said in his closing address, "These were a truly exceptional Games."

The event-by-event reports that follow are by Mel Watman, with additional data supplied by Peter Matthews, who has also compiled and tabulated the results. They show each round prior to finals on the track and qualifying round performances followed by finals in the field events, including leading series.

*National records are underlined. * signifies an Olympic record. J = junior (born 1989/90), Y = Youth (born 1991/2). With acknowledgments to BBC TV, Eurosport, Mark Butler, Alfons Juck and the IAAF and Beijing Olympic websites.*

100m

There is nothing in the long history of the 100m to compare with Usain Bolt's meteoric rise. A phenomenal prodigy at 200m (20.58 at 15, 20.13 at 16, 19.93 at 17) with the 400m as his second string event, he did not run his first documented 100m race until July 18, 2007 when he had a 10.03 victory in Réthimno, Greece. He replicated that time at the start of the 2008 season, in Spanish Town, Jamaica, on March 8 and then sensationally broke through to 9.76 in Kingston on May 3 to become the second fastest man in history. Following 9.92 in Port of Spain, Trinidad on May 17 he succeeded Powell as world record holder with 9.72 in New York on May 31, soundly beating world champion Gay (9.85). At the Jamaican Champs in Kingston on June 28 he ran 9.85, well clear of Powell (9.97), winning his heat and semi in 10.19 and 10.40, while in his final 100m before Beijing he finished a close second (9.89) to Powell (9.88) in Stockholm on July 22. At that time he still didn't know if his coach, Glen Mills, would allow him to run the Olympic 100m.

Happily, he was given the green light and the world was able to witness one of the most breathtaking and memorable moments in the annals of athletics. After sauntering through the rounds in 10.20, 9.92 and 9.85 (and looking stunning in each), he lined up for the 13th 100m race of his life. Exhibiting no signs of nerves before the race—indeed, relishing every minute of the occasion—he built up a three metre lead before shutting down over the last 20m, looking round, dropping his arms and then raising them aloft at the finish. Despite coasting for those last seven giant strides he was timed at a world record 9.69 in absolutely still conditions. His reaction time was an unexceptional 0.165 sec. As an awestruck Michael Johnson gasped: "I've never seen anything like that before. He could have run 9.66." Bolt, five days away from his 22nd birthday, was not bothered about missing an opportunity to have run a considerably faster time. "I came here just to win." Why

didn't he just concentrate on sprinting full out until the finish? "I just wanted to have fun."

It wasn't until halfway through the race that Bolt moved clear of Thompson and Dix, but his speed between 50m and 80m was unprecedented. He totally outclassed the field and yet Thompson and Dix in second and third set pbs of 9.89 and 9.91 respectively, Martina broke his national record (as he had done in previous two rounds) with 9.93, Powell (once again under performing on the big occasion) ran 9.95, Frater clocked a lifetime best of 9.97, while Burns and Patton ran the fastest ever times for 7th and 8th, 10.01 and 10.03! Gay (9.77 and 9.68w at the U.S. Trials), competing for the first time since he injured his hamstring at that meeting six weeks before the Games, improved in each round with 10.22, 10.09 and 10.05, but was obviously not at peak fitness and narrowly failed to make the final. "I did the best I could," he said. Powell, who said "my legs died on me," paid tribute to Bolt: "He was untouchable tonight. He's definitely the greatest."

Bolt will also forever be remembered as the first Jamaican to win this most coveted of titles. Jamaican-born Linford Christie and Donovan Bailey won in 1992 and 1996 but in the colors of Britain and Canada, respectively. Until now the closest someone wearing a Jamaican vest had gotten to taking the title was Herb McKenley, beaten by an agonising 0.01 in 1952, while Don Quarrie lost by 0.02 in 1976.

100 Meters (h, qf 15th, sf, F 16th)

1. Usain Bolt JAM, 1h1 10.20, 1q4 9.92, 1s1 9.85, 9.69* WR; 2. Richard Thompson TRI, 1h3 10.24, 1q2 9.99, 2s2 9.93, 9.89; 3. Walter Dix USA, 3h7 10.35, 2q5 10.08, 2s1 9.95, 9.91; 4. Churandy Martina AHO, 1h10 10.35, 1q1 9.99, 3s2 9.94, 9.93; 5. Asafa Powell JAM, 1h2 10.16, 1q5 10.02, 1s2 9.91, 9.95; 6. Michael Frater JAM, 1h4 10.15, 2q1 10.09, 4s1 10.01, 9.97; 7. Marc Burns TRI, 2h9 10.46, 1q3 10.05, 3s1 9.97, 10.01; 8. Darvis Patton USA, 2h6 10.25, 2q4 10.04, 4s2 10.03, 10.03

200m

They say lightning doesn't strike twice. Not true in the case of this particular Bolt. Having played around in the 100m final, yet emerging with a world record of 9.69, Bolt decided to go for broke in the event which had always been his long-term target. No one could doubt he was going to win. The question was whether he could, or would, attempt to break Michael Johnson's hitherto-unapproached 12 year-old world record of 19.32. The answer came in breathtaking fashion. Drawn in lane 5 he got away to a fast start even though his reaction time of 0.182 was nothing special. Everything else about his race was. He ran a fantastic bend, reportedly taking 9.96 for that first 100m (as against 10.12 by Johnson in Atlanta), and entered the straight two or three meters up on defending champion Crawford. He then proceeded to cover the second 100m, into an 0.9m wind, in 9.34 (9.20 with an 0.4m wind by Johnson) for an overall time of 19.30. There was no playing to the crowd this time; he ran as hard as he could all the way, his huge stride devouring the track, and he dipped at the finish even though he won by around seven meters(0.66), the widest margin in the event's Olympic history. It was a run which will never be forgotten by the 91,000 in the stadium and the countless millions who watched on TV.

With attention on the Jamaican, few noticed what was going on in his wake. In fact, Crawford was overhauled for second place by Martina who, in the race of his life, was timed at 19.82, a huge improvement on his national record of 20.11 in his semi,

and had cause to celebrate becoming the Netherlands Antilles' first-ever medallist. Also in a jubilant mood moments after the race was Spearmon, who in the ninth and outside lane, made up for his usual lethargic bend by moving from last to third in 19.95, just pipping Crawford (19.96) and Dix (19.98). Never before had five men beaten 20 seconds in one race. But minutes later, Spearmon's joy turned to despair when a DQ went up against his name on the scoreboard. He had been disqualified for stepping on the line early in the race. That meant Crawford took his place as Bronze medallist ... but the U.S. lodged a protest that Martina had also committed a line violation and that was upheld (video showed several steps on the line coming off the turn). Thus Crawford was promoted to Silver and Dix came in for a Bronze after crossing the line fifth! Poor Martina must rank along with Liu Xiang, Lolo Jones and various others as the most frustrated athlete of the Games, losing a medal he thought he had won after finishing a close 4th in the 100m.

Just hours short of turning 22, Bolt cavorted around afterward while the public address played "Happy Birthday To You." He had become the first to land the Olympic 100/200 double since Carl Lewis in 1984 and the first man ever to win two Olympic titles at the same Games with a world record in each. The last man to hold world records simultaneously in both sprints was his compatriot Don Quarrie with 9.9 and 19.8 in 1976. As was the case with Johnson in Atlanta, it was his eighth race of the Games (10.20, 9.92, 9.85, 9.69, 20.64, 20.29, 20.09, 19.30). MJ came from the other direction: 45.80, 44.62, 44.59, 43.49, 20.55, 20.37, 20.27, 19.32. "It was an amazing performance," said the man best placed to judge, Johnson himself. "He had a phenomenal start out of the blocks. Drive phase, transition, everything was great."

Bolt said: "I knew the track was fast but I didn't think this was possible. I'm shocked. I have been aspiring to the world record for so long. It is a dream come true. I got out good, I ran the corner as hard as possible and once I entered the straight told myself to 'keep it up, don't die on me now.'" Crawford was another who gave all in defense of his title. "Everything I had in me, I left on the track. You might find some of my skin cells out there."

And what about the 400m for Bolt who ran 45.35 at age 16? "Maybe, but not any time soon," was his response. Bert Cameron, the 1983 world 400m champion and now Jamaica's national coach for the event, believes Bolt will eventually prove as sensational at that distance as in the short sprints. "He promised me he will do it and it'll be six years from now. He doesn't like running the 400, I know that, but when he gets tired of running 200s he'll move up, for sure. For now, he still wants to run faster in the sprints." How fast could Bolt go in 2014? "42.5," affirmed Cameron. Michael Johnson also believes in Bolt's 400m potential and thinks he could run in the low 43s.

Dzingai had been fastest in both first and second rounds and Bolt was just the fastest in the semis.

200 Meters (h, qf 18th, sf 19th, F 20th)

1. Usain Bolt JAM, 2h5 20.64, 1q1 20.29, 1s2 20.09, 19.30* WR; 2. Shawn Crawford USA, 1h1 20.61, 2q1 20.42, 2s2 20.12, 19.96; 3. Walter Dix USA, 2h4 20.77, 2q2 20.27, 3s1 20.19, 19.98; 4. Brian Dzingai ZIM, 1h2 20.25, 1q2 20.23, 2s1 20.17, 20.22; 5. Christian Malcolm GBR, 2h2 20.42, 4q2 20.30, 4s1 20.25, 20.40; 6. Kim Collins SKN, 2h3 20.55, 3q1 20.43, 4s2 20.25, 20.59

400m

They met four times this year and the score was 2-2. Merritt won in Berlin (44.03-44.07) and the US Trials (44.00-44.20), while Wariner had gained the upper hand subsequently in Rome (44.36-44.37) and Paris (43.86-44.35). This was set to be some race as Wariner defended his title against the man he had defeated for the world title in Osaka, 43.45-43.96. Surely they would fight it out tooth and nail in sub-44 sec. times.

That's not quite how it turned out. During the rounds all proceeded smoothly towards a grand climax. Wariner won his semi in 44.15, looking very easy, and Merritt took his in an even quicker time (44.12) after a flurry of fast times in the heats with six men inside 45 sec., including for the first time the British second-string Steele, who improved from 45.31 to 44.94. Next fastest to the American pair in the semis were Brown (44.59), Rooney (pb 44.60 for 8th on the UK all-time list and the quickest by a European this year, moving from 7th to 2nd along the finishing straight), Wissman, Djhone and Quow (pb 44.82). The other finalist was the third American, Neville, although Kevin Borlée was unlucky not to progress with his Belgian record of 44.88. His twin brother Jonathan set a pb of 45.11 in another semi. World indoor champion Christopher, surprisingly eliminated in the heats, was suffering from flu.

Except for the magnificent running of Merritt (22), the final was something of a letdown. At 300m there was little between the three Americans but, instead of the anticipated duel to the finish between Merritt and Wariner, the defending champion simply folded, leaving Merritt to score by a wide margin in his fastest ever and world leading time of 43.75—and that despite a very slow reaction time (0.318). Only Michael Johnson, Butch Reynolds, Wariner and Quincy Watts have ever run faster. Wariner was nearly caught by Neville, who dived over the line to deprive Brown of the Bronze. The winning margin of 0.99 was the widest in over a century of Olympic 400m finals.

Merritt said: "In the semi-finals I looked smooth and almost PR'ed, so I knew that I was going to come out and run faster than I've ever run. We had a game plan, stuck to it, got a Goldmedal and I'm happier than I've ever been. The game plan was to get out and use what I have. I went over some stuff last night and saw that some people were taking less steps than me in the race. And I'm 6-3, so why is that? I'm not using what I have. So I used my stride length and ran a great race." Wariner stated: "I got out front in the first 200. I felt good coming out of the turn, but when I tried to go I didn't have anything left. I ran the best I could. I didn't give up. I'm disappointed. If I had run like I did in the semi-finals I think I would have won. LaShawn just ran a better race than I did."

400 Meters (h 18th, sf 19th, F 21st)

1. LaShawn Merritt USA, 1h5 44.96, 1s3 44.12, 43.75; 2. Jeremy Wariner USA, 1h7 45.23, 1s1 44.15, 44.74; 3. David Neville USA, 2h1 45.22, 2s2 44.91, 44.80; 4. Chris Brown BAH, 1h2 44.79, 2s1 44.59, 44.84; 5. Leslie Djhone FRA, 1h1 45.12, 1s2 44.79, 45.11; 6. Martyn Rooney GBR, 1h4 45.00, 2s3 44.60, 45.12; 7. Renny Quow TRI, 2h6 45.13, 4s3 44.82, 45.22; 8. Johan Wissman SWE, 3h2 44.81, 3s3 44.64, 45.39

800m

What a race it could have been: defending champion Borzakovskiy against his runner-up in Athens, Mulaudzi, and Kaki, the junior who's the world's

Continued on next page

fastest this year, plus Chepkirwok, Symmonds and Laâlou. The trouble was that none of them made the final. Inexplicably, Kaki trailed in last in his semi, nearly 30m behind the winner. As for Borzakovskiy, ironically for once he stayed close to the leaders throughout but with only two to qualify automatically he found himself unable to catch Bungei, while the new Cuban hope López finished strongly to overtake the Russian.

Bungei won a very fast opening heat in 1:44.90 from Borzakovskiy (after Mohajershojaei had gone through in 50.89 and 1:18.20), and Kirwa Yego was the fastest semi-final winner with 1:44.73 (Peçanha 51.02 and Kirwa 1:18.40). Bungei (28), the fastest of all active two-lappers with his 2002 pb of 1:42.34, finally won an outdoor global title at the fifth attempt. As in his semi, Bungei ran it from the front, winding it up all the way and passing 400 in 53.35 and 600 in 1:19.17 (25.82 200) before covering the final 200 in 25.48 for his season's best of 1:44.65. Ismail and López were second and third entering the final straight but while Ismail narrowed the gap to just 0.05 the Cuban fell back to 6th. There were strong finishes from Kirwa Yego and Reed, the 2007 World 1–2. Bungei certainly timed his season well as his best this year stood at 1:45.08 when winning the Kenyan trial and that ranked him only 19th among the Beijing entrants. What were his tactics? "I came here not knowing exactly what I was going to do. I found myself in front, and I said, "OK, let's go." Note that Kenyan-born athletes filled three of the top five places as Kamel is the former Gregory Konchellah, son of the two-time world 800m champion. Ismail is a native-born Sudanese and became his country's first Olympic medalist. For the first time in Olympic history there was no European finalist.

800 Meters (h 20th, sf 21st, F 23rd)

1. Wilfred Bungei KEN, 1h1 1:44.90, 1s1 1:46.23, 1:44.65; 2. Ahmed Ismail SUD, 2h5 1:45.87, 2s2 1:44.91, 1:44.70; 3. Alfred Kirwa Yego KEN, 2h4 1:46.04, 1s2 1:44.73, 1:44.82; 4. Gary Reed CAN, 3h5 1:46.02, 2s3 1:45.85, 1:44.94; 5. Yusuf Saad Kamel BRN, 2h7 1:46.94, 3s2 1:44.95, 1:44.95; 6. Yeimer López CUB, 1h8 1:45.66, 2s1 1:46.40, 1:45.88; 7. Nabil Madi ALG, 3h8 1:45.75, 1s3 1:45.63, 1:45.96; 8. Nadjim Manseur ALG, 3h1 1:45.62, 4s2 1:45.54, 1:47.19

1500m

What a championship racer the Moroccan-born Ramzi (28) has proved to be. At the 2005 World Champs he became the first man since Peter Snell at the 1964 Olympics to win the 800/1500m double at the global level, and in last year's Worlds, although short of training after an injury, he finished a close second to Lagat. This year he adopted an unorthodox route toward the ultimate goal: an Olympic title. After placing an undistinguished 5th in the World Indoors he eschewed any further races at 1500m. Instead he ran a couple of over-distance races: 2 miles in 8:13.16 (7:43.85 3000m en route) and 5000m in 13:10.72. Those were mightily impressive times by a man who has run 1:44.05 for 800m and that combination of speed and endurance suggested something special from him in Beijing.

Special he was. He opened his 1500m account for 2008 with the fastest-ever heat time of 3:32.89 (38.90 last 300m, easing up!), and went on to take his semi in 3:37.11 in which the final 700m was covered in 1:35.06 (1:48.6 800m pace). That was a loaded race as he was followed in by Baala, Baddeley, Choge and Willis while those eliminated included Lagat, Mekonnen, Boukensa, Sullivan and Moustou. However, another runner was also showing terrific form: the Kenyan junior Kipro, who last

year was 4th in the World Champs 1500m after winning the World Junior cross country. The lanky, long striding 19-year-old won the other semi in 3:37.04, clocking close to 51 sec. for his last lap and being fifth with 200m to go.

Kipro and Choge planned to make it a fast race, aiming to reach 1200m in 2:50 in an attempt to blunt Ramzi's feared kick. Kipro led through the first lap in 56.48 while Choge, Commonwealth 5000m champion and the fastest entrant on this year's times with 3:31.57, went ahead at 800m (1:56.06). Ramzi, fourth at the bell behind Choge, Iguider and Ali, had moved up to third by 1200m with Choge (well adrift of schedule with 2:53.67) ahead of Ali. Choge, who would eventually fade badly to 10th, continued to lead along the back straight but when Ramzi burst ahead with around 250m to go only Kipro was able to give serious chase. Ramzi's pace around the final turn was stupendous (Mark Butler, the BBC statistician, timed him from 1300 to 1400m in 12.5) and although Kipro closed toward the end Ramzi was never going to be caught. In becoming Bahrain's first-ever Olympic winner, in 3:32.94, he covered the last lap in 52.9. Kipro, who has run 3:31.64, is a prodigious talent of whom we shall hear much more, while Commonwealth champion Willis ran the race of his life to move from sixth to third in the finishing straight and add his name to New Zealand's remarkable list of Olympic 1500m medallists: Jack Lovelock (1st 1936), Peter Snell (1st 1964), John Davies (3rd 1964), Rod Dixon (3rd 1972) and John Walker (1st 1976).

1500 Metres, (h 15th, sf 17th, F 19th)

1. Rashid Ramzi BRN, 1h4 3:32.89, 1s2 3:37.11, 3:32.94; 2. Asbel Kipro KEN-J, 1h2 3:41.28, 1s1 3:37.04, 3:33.11; 3. Nick Willis NZL, 2h1 3:36.01, 5s2 3:37.54, 3:34.16; 4. Mehdi Baala FRA, 1h1 3:35.87, 2s2 3:37.47, 3:34.21; 5. Juan Carlos Higuero ESP, 3h2 3:41.70, 3s1 3:37.31, 3:34.44; 6. Abdelati Iguider MAR, 4h3 3:36.48, 2s1 3:37.21, 3:34.66; 7. Juan van Deventer RSA, 1h3 3:36.32, 6s1 3:37.75, 3:34.77; 8. Belal Mansoor Ali BRN, 6h3 3:36.84, 5s1 3:37.60, 3:35.23; 9. Andy Baddeley GBR, 3h3 3:36.47, 3s2 3:37.47, 3:35.3; 10. Augustine Choge KEN, 3h4 3:35.47, 4s2 3:37.54, 3:35.50

5000m

A magisterial display by Kenenisa Bekele enabled him to join one of the world's most illustrious clubs: runners who have landed an Olympic 5000m/10,000m double at the same Games. The founder member back in 1912 was Hannes Kolehmainen but Paavo Nurmi and Ville Ritola were denied entry as they won both races but on separate occasions. Emil Zátopek joined in 1952 (what a show-off, he won the marathon too!), Vladimir Kuts in 1956, Lasse Viren in 1972 (reapplying in 1976) and Miruts Yifter in 1980. Now, after 28 years, there are two new members: Bekele and, no discrimination allowed in this club, Tirunesh Dibaba.

Run in 30°C heat the final proved to be a classic even though it got off to a slow start until the Ethiopian trio of Cherkos (a junior) and the Bekele brothers took charge on the second lap. The first kilometer may have taken 2:45.49 because of the shuffling first lap but the second took 2:36.80 and the third 2:38.56. It was at that point (8:00.85 at 3000m) that Bekele began the race in earnest. The other two Ethiopians dropped back and, with Kipchoge leading the pursuit, the next two laps took 59.96 and 61.36. By 4000m (10:32.52) world champion Lagat had been dropped and would eventually finish 9th, half a lap behind the winner. That

fourth kilometer was covered by Bekele in a savage 2:31.67 ... and he was still only gathering himself for his final surge to victory. With two laps to go Kipchoge, Soi and Kipsiro were still hanging on but suffering, and soon afterward Kipsiro parted company. Soi was next to lose contact.

Even Kipchoge, the 2003 world champion and third behind El Guerrouj and Bekele in Athens, was left for dead when Bekele launched his finishing kick. It was an awesome display as the Kenyan ran his last lap inside 59 sec. but was left 35m behind because Bekele ran 53.87! Clocking 12:57.82 to shatter Saïd Aouita's 1984 Olympic record of 13:05.59, Bekele covered the final kilometer in 2:25.30 and the last mile in 3:58.7. Although world record-holder at this distance as well as the 10,000m, this was Bekele's first global title in the event and it is difficult to see him beaten in the foreseeable future. Who could shake him off? Who could possibly out-sprint him?

5000 Metres, (h 20th, F 23rd)

1. Kenenisa Bekele ETH, 3h3 13:40.13, 12:57.82; 2. Eliud Kipchoge KEN, 2h1 13:37.50, 13:02.80; 3. Edwin Soi KEN, 1h2 13:46.41, 13:06.22; 4. Moses Kipsiro UGA, 2h2 13:46.58, 13:10.56; 5. Abreham Cherkos ETH, 3h2 13:47.60, 13:16.46; 6. Tariku Bekele ETH, 3h1 13:37.63, 13:19.06; 7. Juan Luis Barrios MEX, 7h1 13:42.39, 13:19.79; 8. James Kwalia QAT, 2h3 13:39.96, 13:23.48; 9. Bernard Lagat USA, 1h3 13:39.70, 13:26.89; 10. Kidane Tadese ERI, 4h1 13:37.72, 13:28.40

10,000m

Still only 26, Bekele has joined the Olympic immortals of the event by winning a second 10,000m Gold medal, thus emulating Nurmi (1920/1928), Zátopek (1948/1952), Viren (1972/1976) and Gebrselassie (1996/2000), and he has already signalled his intention to go for a third in London. There was a sense of déjà vu when, as in Athens and also at the 2005 and 2007 World Champs, Bekele sprinted home chased by Sihine, the Alain Mimoun of our days. Only the Bronze medalist changes: Z Tadese in Athens, Mosop in Helsinki, Mathathi in Osaka, and Kogo this time.

Given the favorable conditions and the intention of the Eritreans to ensure a hot pace to draw the sting from Bekele's finish, the slow early pace was as surprising as it was disappointing. Once again the opposition was playing into the Ethiopians' hands. After a lethargic opening kilometer of 2:50.15 the Eritreans, led by Kidane Tadese, took charge with sprightly kilometers of 2:37.17 and 2:42.61, but then it slowed again (2:49.58 and 2:48.49) for a halfway time of 13:48.00. The second half was, however, covered in 13:13.17. Actually the five fastest kilometers added up to 13:04.42 (Aouita's Olympic 5000m record from 1984 stood at 13:05.59!) while the three quickest totalled 7:43.34.

Gebrselassie, who in view of the good weather now regrets his decision to bypass the marathon, showed ahead briefly during the sixth kilometer (2:45.92) but it was Zersenay Tadese (Kidane's brother) who was initially responsible for the prolonged drive to the finish and the next two kilometers were run in 2:40.79 and 2:39.07. Kogo and Masai had turns in front and following a penultimate kilometer of 2:40.29 there were seven men still in the hunt: three Ethiopians, three Kenyans and Z Tadese.

Predictably, Bekele dashed ahead just before the bell, followed by Sihine and Gebrselassie, and produced a majestic last lap of 53.42, easing up to savor his victory, and clocking the Olympic record

time of 27:01.17. Sihine finished in his accustomed second place while Kogo nailed the Bronze just 0.001 ahead of teammate Masai (27:04.104 to 27:04.105). Tadese and Gebrselassie (for whom this must have been a useful tune-up prior to attacking his world marathon record in Berlin next month) came next, while Mathathi set a pb in 7th. The first "European" was Bayrak with a Turkish record of 27:39.33 but he was formerly Girma Legese of Ethiopia so the first finisher to be born outside of Africa was the American, Rupp, 13th. Had there been a team race, Ethiopia would have outscored Kenya 9–14. There were best-ever times for places 20–21, 23–31 and 34 (previous records 19 under 28:00 in Worlds 2005, 26 under 28:30 Stanford 2007). Four of top six were also in the top 6 in 2004. Only four European-born athletes ran.

Counting individual world cross country victories, Bekele now has 16 senior global titles to his name as against Gebrselassie's 10, but Bekele remains modest: "I have to have many more years of winning events before I can compare myself to him."

10,000 Metres, (17th)

1. Kenenisa Bekele ETH, 27:01.17*; 2. Sileshi Sihine ETH, 27:02.77; 3. Micah Kogo KEN, 27:04.11; 4. Moses Masai KEN, 27:04.11; 5. Zersenay Tadese ERI, 27:05.11; 6. Haile Gebrselassie ETH, 27:06.68; 7. Martin Mathathi KEN, 27:08.25; 8. Abdullah Ahmad Hassan QAT, 27:23.75; 9. Fabian Joseph TAN, 27:25.33; 10. Boniface Kiprop UGA, 27:27.28

Marathon

One of the most extraordinary performances of an altogether amazing Olympics came in this the last event. The conventional wisdom is that fast times are the preserve of the big city marathons run, usually, in favorably cool conditions and often with the advantage of pacemakers. Olympic and world championship marathons, staged so often in very hot weather, are different. Indeed, until now the fastest time ever registered in a global title race was 2:08:31 by Gharib when winning the 2003 world title in Paris—and on that occasion it was cool and wet. The weather during the Beijing race was hot, starting at 24°C and rising. Scorching, too, was the pace ... unprecedented for a title race.

Basically, Wanjiru ran the legs off all his rivals, helping to set a fierce pace which could have proved suicidal but ultimately killed off those bold or foolish enough to try and keep up with him. The opening 5K of 14:52 was pretty nippy but that was followed by one of 14:33, and at 10k it was former European marathon champion Juan Manuel Martínez (29:25) heading a group including Wanjiru, Lel, Gharib, Merga, Asmerom, Yonas Kifle and world champion Kibet (drafted in to replace the injured Robert Cheruiyot), with Kebede next at 29:32. The next two 5K segments were very uneven, covered in 15:11 and 14:34, the 20K mark being reached in 59:10. At halfway—the leaders operating at close to 2:05 pace—the order was: Kifle, Wanjiru, Merga, Lel and Gharib 62:34, Kebede and Asmerom 62:50, Kibet (who would be one of 19 non-finishers) 62:57, Goumri (destined to finish 20th) 63:07, Röhlin 63:49.

The top five drew far away from the rest over the next 5K (14:48) and after a 15:16 split the situation at 30K was that Wanjiru and Merga (1:29:14) had opened a small gap over Gharib (1:29:18), while Lel (1:29:23) and Kifle (1:29:29) were having to leg go. Kifle, with a best of 2:07:34, would pay a heavy price for his ambition as he wound up 36th in

2:20:23, taking 23:27 between 35 and 40K. Kebede passed 30K in 1:30:25, Asmerom 1:30:26, Röhlin 1:31:38. Gharib, world champion in 2003 and 2005, caught up the leading duo during the next 5K (15:23), and it was in the 37th kilometer that Wanjiru tested his two remaining rivals. Gharib was able to stay with him, Merga couldn't and fell away sharply. Now 30*, Wanjiru finally broke Gharib and at 40K (15:17 for that 5K) he cleared in 1:59:54 from Merga 2:01:51 and Kebede 2:02:37.

Covering the final 2.195K in 6:38, with a last 200m of around 33 sec., Wanjiru set a brilliant Olympic record of 2:06:32 with Gharib also way inside Carlos Lopes' old mark of 2:09:21 in 1984. Merga entered the stadium third but he was on his last legs and Paris marathon winner Kebede overtook him for the Bronze with 200m to go. Lel was 5th ahead of Osaka Bronze medallist Röhlin. Defending champion Baldini, not at his best after a recent hamstring tear, pluckily completed the course in 12th, as did Martínez (14th) after such a foolish start. Wanjiru, a 21 year-old Kenyan based in Japan, is holder of the world half marathon record with 58:33 last year and holds the world junior 10,000m record with 26:41.75 in 2005. This was his third marathon, following a winning debut (2:06:39) in Fukuoka last December and 2:05:24 behind Lel (2:05:15) in London in April. He will be feted as Kenya's first Olympic marathon champion.

Marathon, (24th) Half marathon times in 2nd column

1. Samuel Wanjiru KEN, 2:06:32*, 62:34; 2. Jaouad Gharib MAR, 2:07:16, 62:34; 3. Tsegay Kebede ETH, 2:10:00, 62:50; 4. Deriba Merga ETH, 2:10:21, 62:34; 5. Martin Lel KEN, 2:10:24, 62:34; 6. Viktor Röhlin SUI, 2:10:35, 63:49; 7. Gashaw Asfaw Melese ETH, 2:10:52, 63:50; 8. Yared Asmerom ERI, 2:11:11, 62:50; 9. Dathan Ritzenhein USA, 2:11:59, 63:54; 10. Ryan Hall USA, 2:12:33, 64:29

3000m Steeplechase

Even though the world's #1, Paul Koech (8:00.57 this year), was not selected, the expectation was that Kenya would sweep the medals. However, defending Olympic champion Kemboi faded from first to seventh during a pulsating last lap and Kenya had to settle for first and third. World champion Kipruto (23), Silver medallist in Athens when still a junior, notched up Kenya's seventh consecutive victory in this event since 1984 (plus wins in 1968 and 1972, while Kenya boycotted in 1976 and 1980), with the bronze going—as it did in last year's World Champs—to Matelong. The totally unheralded silver medallist was a Frenchman of North African descent, not Tahri but Mekhissi-Benabbad, who had a best of 8:28.25 in 2006, 8:14.22 last year (but ran only 8:33.11 in his heat in Osaka) and had progressed to 8:17.22 this season to rank 14th among those entered. In his heat he improved to 8:16.95 but in the final this 3:35.73 1500m performer ran an inspired race to clock 8:10.49, only a metre behind the winner!

The first kilometer was slowly run at 2:46.97, the only significant happening being that Hachlaf lost a shoe early in the proceedings and rejoined the race way behind the others. At 4:20, Famiglietti (who led his heat by 50m at one point and finished with a pb) dashed ahead, but he didn't stay in front for long and Mohamed was the leader at 2000m in 5:33.84, that second kilometer having been just as slow at 2:46.87. Then the pace quickened and at the bell Kemboi, Matelong and Mekhissi-Benabbad were close together, with Kipruto seemingly out of

it in sixth or seventh place. Matelong took the lead with 250m to run but Kipruto, up to fifth with 200m left, was closing all the time and was ahead at the final barrier as Kemboi crumpled. That last kilometer was covered in 2:36.50, while the leader's time for the last lap was 59.29 so as Kipruto came from way back he probably ran close to 58 sec.! Jarso, 4th in 8:13.47 for an Ethiopian record, became his country's second highest ever placer in this event, surpassed only by Eshetu Tura's Bronze in 1980.

3000 Meters Steeplechase (h 16th, F 18th)

1. Brimin Kipruto KEN, 2h1 8:23.53, 8:10.34; 2. Mahiedine Mekhissi-Benabbad FRA, 2h2 8:16.95, 8:10.49; 3. Richard Matelong KEN, 2h3 8:19.87, 8:11.01; 4. Yacob Jarso ETH, 1h2 8:16.88, 8:13.47; 5. Bouabdellah Tahri FRA, 1h1 8:23.42, 8:14.79; 6. Youcef Abdi AUS, 6h2 8:17.97, 8:16.36; 7. Ezekiel Kemboi KEN, 4h2 8:17.55, 8:16.38; 8. Ali Abubaker Kamal QAT, 4h3 8:21.85, 8:16.59; 9. Benjamim Kiplagat UGA-J, 3h3 8:20.22, 8:20.27; 10. Mustafa Mohamed SWE, 5h2 8:17.80, 8:20.69

110m Hurdles

Not just the 91,000 in the stadium who had turned up to watch him in the heats but possibly the entire population of China were stunned when their hero, Liu Xiang, was unable to defend his Olympic title. There had been rumors of his struggling with a foot injury but it was still a shock to see him grimacing in pain as he settled in his blocks having pulled up limping after a warm-up over two hurdles. It didn't seem possible that he could compete, but he was going to try. However, a false start resulted in his being able only to hobble to the first hurdle and the decision was made. In front of a puzzled and stunned crowd he walked away and out of view. The hugely anticipated clash between him and his successor as world record-holder, Robles, would not take place. The withdrawal of European champion Olijar (quadriceps injury warming up) and an injury to double Olympic Silver medallist Trammell, who could manage just one hurdle in his heat, reduced the challengers yet further.

It's doubtful if anyone could have held Robles anyway. The Cuban, who ran a world record 12.87 and 12.96 in June, 12.88 and 12.91 in July, produced another sparkling performance in the final. Taking seven strides to the first hurdle instead of the more usual eight, he clocked an unstrained 12.93 to win by 0.24 from Payne, who just held on from the more fancied Oliver for the Silver medal, while 2005 world champion Doucouré continued his fine comeback after a hamstring injury by taking 4th in 13.24 after a 13.22 semi. Another European to run well was the 2006 world junior champion Noga, who improved from 13.44 to 13.36 in his quarter-final and 13.34 in his semi before placing fifth in 13.36 in the final.

One of Robles' most appreciative fans is Colin Jackson, who remarked: "He is just brilliant. He makes fast times look so simple." Now Robles has notched up his first global title to prove his competitive worth and as he is only 21 there should be many more to come.

110 Meters Hurdles (h 18th, qf 19th, sf 20th, F 21st)

1. Dayron Robles CUB, 1h1 13.39, 1q2 13.19, 1s1 13.12, 12.93; 2. David Payne USA, 1h4 13.42, 1q1 13.24, 2s1 13.21, 13.17; 3. David Oliver USA, 1h2 13.30, 1q4 13.16, 1s2 13.31, 13.18; 4. Ladji Doucouré FRA, 2h4 13.52, 2q4 13.39, 3s1 13.22, 13.24; 5. Artur Noga POL, 1h5 13.53, 2q2 13.36, 2s2 13.34, 13.36; 6. Maurice Wignall JAM, 4h4 13.61, 1q3 13.36, 4s2 13.40, 13.46; 7. Richard Phillips JAM, 4h1 13.60, 5q1 13.48, 4s1 13.43, 13.60; 8. Jackson Quiñonez ESP, 2h2 13.41, 3q4 13.47, 3s2 13.40, 13.69

Continued on next page

400m Hurdles

On paper he was only the USA's third string with a modest season's best of 48.42 behind Clement's 47.79 and Jackson's 48.15, but it was Taylor who came good on the day. Extremely good, in fact, as at the age of 29 he not only reclaimed the Olympic title but broke his personal best of 47.50 that he set when winning in Sydney! He thus joined the select ranks of double champions in this event: Glenn Davis (1956/1960) and Ed Moses (1976/1984). "It means the world to me," said Taylor. "I think I could have run faster though [his 47.25 was easily the year's fastest and equal eighth on the world all-time list]. It's such a great feeling. I was the Olympic champion in 2000. Coming back in 2004 I wanted to defend my title but I didn't make the final. I was a little disappointed then but at the same time I made the team injured. I had stress fractures in both shins." The last time he broke 48 sec. before the Beijing final was back in 2001 and in recent seasons he had shone more brightly on the flat with a best of 44.05 last year. This year his record had been spotty: in June he was 6th in Berlin (50.06) and 3rd in the U.S. Trials (48.42); in July he was 9th in Rome (50.93) and 3rd in Paris (48.91); but here he got it just right. After winning his heat, easing up, in 48.67 he took his semi in 47.94 and he led all the way in the final to win by some six meters from Clement (who shut off on the run-in after losing his chance of victory by stuttering before the final hurdle) with Jackson 3rd. It was the first medal sweep in this event since the USA in 1960 and it brought to 18 the number of U.S. victories out of 23 Olympic 400m hurdles contests entered. Fourth went to McFarlane (36), the Silver medallist in Athens behind Sánchez, who in Beijing in his first race of the year failed to survive his heat. McFarlane's time of 48.30 broke his own world 35 and over best.

400 Meters Hurdles (h 15th, sf 16th, F 18th)

1. Angelo Taylor USA, 1h2 48.67, 1s1 47.94, 47.25; 2. Kerron Clement USA, 1h4 49.42, 1s2 48.27, 47.98; 3. Bershawn Jackson USA, 1h1 49.20, 2s1 48.02, 48.06, 4. Danny McFarlane JAM, 2h2 48.86, 2s2 48.33, 48.30; 5. L.J. van Zyl RSA, 2h3 48.86, 3s1 48.57, 48.42; 6. Marek Plawgo POL, 3h3 49.17, 4s1 48.75, 48.52; 7. Markino Buckley JAM, 1h3 48.65, 3s2 48.50, 48.60, 8. Periklis Iakovakis GRE, 2h4 49.50, 4s2 48.69, 49.96

High Jump

Selectors don't always get it right but the Russians did with their change of mind after Silnov, the 23-year-old European champion, who was not originally in the team after placing 4th in the Russian Champs (2.30), cleared 2.38 in London six days later followed by another victory in Monaco (2.33). He was accompanied in the Beijing final by the Russian champion Rybakov, three-time Silver medallist at the World Champs, but Voronin—who defeated Tereshin in a jump-off for the third Russian team place—failed to make the final, alongside world champion Thomas, 2.29 and, for four men 2.25 sufficed, but astonishingly, given the event's history, three Britons reached the final and no Americans!

The final was a thriller. The real action began with the bar set at 2.32. Mason, who won medals at the 2000 and 2002 World Juniors and 2004 World Indoors for Jamaica but has been a British citizen since 2006 (British father, Jamaican mother), was first to clear but he was quickly supplanted as leader by defending champion Holm and Silnov. Two more made it at the third attempt: Spank, with a huge clearance for a pb, and Rybakov. At 2.34 Mason,

who had not been considered as a possible candidate, cleared at the first attempt to tie his pb from 2003 (still the Jamaican record) and move to third on the UK all-time list behind Steve Smith and Dalton Grant. Rybakov also made it first time to move briefly into second, but Silnov maintained his clean sheet to claim the outright lead on countback. However, six men were left in when the bar was raised to 2.36 as Holm had passed after one failure at 2.34, Spank after two, and Bába after a miss at both 2.32 and 2.34. Only Silnov with a spectacular first time clearance succeeded and the Gold medal was his. Holm went so close at his first attempt but he along with the others dropped out and, contesting the last championship of his great career, the Swede wound up 4th with Spank 5th. Bronze went to Rybakov while Mason claimed silver, the highest ever British Olympic placing in this event. Pat Leahy in 1900 and his brother Con in 1908 had also finished second but they were Irishmen obliged to compete under a Great Britain & Ireland banner. The 1.98m tall Silnov went on to have three failures at the Russian and Olympic record height of 2.42.

High Jump, (Q 2.32 17th, F 19th)

1. Andrey Silnov RUS, 2.29q, 2.36, (2.20/1, 2.25/1, 2.29/1, 2.32/1, 2.34/1, 2.36/1, 2.42/xxx); 2. Germaine Mason GBR, 2.29, 2.34, (2.20/1, 2.25/1, 2.29/x, 2.32/1, 2.34/1, 2.36/xxx); 3. Yaroslav Rybakov RUS, 2.25, 2.34, (2.20/1, 2.25/1, 2.29/1, 2.32/3, 2.34/1, 2.36/xxx); 4. Stefan Holm SWE, 2.29, 2.32, (2.20/1, 2.25/1, 2.29/1, 2.32/1, 2.34/x, 2.36/xx); 5. Raul Spank GER, 2.29, 2.32, (2.15/1, 2.20/1, 2.25/1, 2.29/1, 2.32/3, 2.34/xx, 2.36/x); 6. Jaroslav Bába CZE, 2.29, 2.29; 7. Tomáš Janku CZE, 2.29, 2.29; 8. Tom Parsons GBR, 2.25, 2.25; 9. Martyn Bernard GBR, 2.29, 2.29; 10= Jessé de Lima BRA, 2.29, 2.29; 10= Filippo Campioli ITA, 2.25, 2.20

Pole Vault

The pole vault proved a remarkable contest in several ways. First there was the qualifying competition. With 38 entrants and not starting until 8:40 p.m., it dragged on until after midnight and at that point officials wisely decided to curtail it by advancing the 13 men who had cleared 5.65. Surprisingly that number did not include world champion and world leader this year (6.04) Brad Walker, who had been at least co-favorite, while Hooker (6.00 this year) only scraped through by clearing 5.65 at the final attempt. Interestingly Steve Lewis had complained of the uprights being in the wrong place for his final attempt at his opening height of 5.45, and there was failure after failure at 5.65 until TV pictures showed a technician making adjustments to the electronics at one of the standards. After that came most of the clearances.

In the final Commonwealth champion Hooker continued to live dangerously, for after clearing his opening height of 5.60 without trouble he passed 5.70 and 5.75. He returned at 5.80 and after two failures he faced the prospect of going out in 7th place. However, he soared over with plenty to spare at his final attempt to move to 2nd behind world indoor champion and 6.01 performer Lukyanenko, who had cleared the first time. By then everyone else had been eliminated except for Yurchenko, who had made 5.70 first time and then, nursing an injury, passed every subsequent height. Astonishingly 5.70 sufficed for the Bronze medal, the lowest such height since 1984. At the last three Games 5.92, 5.90 and 5.85 was needed for a medal.

The duel resumed at 5.85 and as both men went over at the third attempt they were tied for first, the reason being that Lukyanenko had chalked up two failures at his opening height of 5.60 while

Hooker had those two misses at 5.80. The Gold medal was decided at 5.90. The Russian bowed out, although he went desperately close at the final try, while the 26 year-old Australian not only cleared that height at the third attempt but did the same at the Olympic record height of 5.96... four successive last gasp clearances, unique in Olympic annals! Incidentally, Hooker's mother, the former Erica Nixon, was an Olympic long jumper in 1972 (2nd in 1978 Commonwealth Games) while his father Bill was a 1:45.36 800m runner.

Pole Vault, (Q 5.75 20th, F 22nd)

1. Steve Hooker AUS, 5.65q, 5.96*, (5.60/1, 5.80/3, 5.85/3, 5.90/3, 5.96/3); 2. Yevgeniy Lukyanenko RUS, 5.65, 5.85, (5.60/3, 5.70/1,), 1, 5.80/1, 5.85/3, 5.90/xxx); 3. Denys Yurchenko UKR, 5.65, 5.70, (5.45/3, 5.60/2, 5.70/1); 4. Derek Miles USA, 5.65, 5.70, (5.45/1, 5.60/3, 5.70/2, 5.80/xxx); 5. Dmitry Starodubtsev RUS, 5.65, 5.70, (5.45/3, 5.60/3, 5.70/2, 5.80/xxx); 6. Danny Ecker GER, 5.65, 5.70, (5.45/2, 5.70/3, 5.75/xxx); 7. Jérôme Clavier FRA, 5.65, 5.60; 8. Raphael Holzdeppe GER-J, 5.65, 5.60; 9. Igor Pavlov RUS, 5.65, 5.60; 10. Jan Kudlicka CZE, 5.65, 5.45

Long Jump

For the first time in Olympic history (not counting the boycotted 1980 Games) no American made the long jump final, and for the first time Panama can boast an Olympic champion. The nearest approach to that previously was when Lloyd LaBeach (actually a Jamaican) placed third in both the 100m and 200m in 1948.

Only three men attained the automatic qualifying standard of 8.15 and despite a lowly 7.94 sufficing to advance to the final, the softest mark for 20 years, the casualties included three men who have jumped 8.30 or better this year (Al-Khuwalidi, Quinley and Johnson) plus Howe and Tomlinson, clearly not fully recovered from injury. There was a scare also for the overwhelming favorite, Saladino (25), who after two fouls found 8.01 got him through in 9th place. The leading qualification mark of Tsátoumas (8.27) would have netted him the silver medal, but in the final he failed to register a jump.

Makusha led the final with a first round 8.19 until Saladino jumped 8.21 in the third round. At that stage Camejo was 3rd with 8.09, but in the next round Badji displaced him with 8.16 while Mokoea briefly took the lead with 8.24, only to be overtaken by Saladino's 8.34. That's how it stayed until the final round in which Martínez with 8.19 went to 4th behind Makusha on countback (8.04-8.10). Unfortunately for the young Zimbabwean who has improved this year from 7.69 to 8.30, Camejo reclaimed the Bronze medal position with his final effort of 8.20. Admittedly a knee injury has held Saladino back since his exceptional leap of 8.73 in Hengelo in May but his winning jump of 8.34 was the shortest to win an Olympic title since 1972 and overall this was a rather mediocre competition.

Long Jump, (Q 8.15 16th, F 18th)

1. Irving Saladino PAN, 8.01/0.2q, 8.34/-0.3, (x, 8.17/-0.1, 8.21/0.1, 8.34, x, x); 2. Khotso Mokoea RSA, 8.14/0.3, 8.24/0.0, (7.86, x, 8.02, 8.24, x, x); 3. Ibrahim Camejo CUB, 8.23/0.5, 8.20/0.2, (7.94, 8.09, 8.08, 7.88, 7.93, 8.20); 4. Ngonidzashé Makusha ZIM, 8.14/0.0, 8.19/0.6, (8.19, 8.06, 8.05, 8.10, 8.05, 6.48); 5. Wilfredo Martínez CUB, 8.07/0.1, 8.19/-0.4, (7.60, 7.90, x, 8.04, x, 8.19); 6. Ndiass Kaba Badji SEN, 8.07/-0.5, 8.16/0.2; 7. Luis Felipe Méliz ESP, 7.95/0.1, 8.07/-0.1; 8. Roman Novotny CZE, 7.94/-0.2, 8.00/-0.3; 9. Gable Garennotse BOT, 7.95/0.4, 7.85/0.1; 10. Greg Rutherford GBR, 8.16/-0.1, 7.84/-0.4

Triple Jump

World indoor champion Idowu, unbeaten all year, looked so casual in heading the qualifiers with 17.44 that he strengthened his status as favorite, and an opening effort in the final of 17.51 made him the

early leader. That position didn't last long and he knew there would be no easy route to the Gold medal he expected when in the second-round world champion Évora, who had achieved only 17.24 this summer prior to Beijing (17.34 in qualifying), jumped 17.56. Idowu's reply was 17.31 and later in the round he was demoted to third when Giralt posted a pb of 17.52. Idowu bounced back in the third round with an outdoor pb of 17.62 (17.71 from take-off) to wrest back the lead, while the next jumper, Sands, moved into second with a Bahamian record of 17.59. The Briton's dream of Gold began to crumble in the fourth round when Évora reached 17.67 (17.80 from take-off), to which his own response was a foul. A fifth round 17.26 was insufficient, so it all depended on the final round. Neither man got it right and so the title went to the 24-year-old Ivory Coast-born Portuguese, whose previous Olympic experience in Athens had been horrendous (40th overall with 15.72). No pleasant memories of those Games for Idowu either; he had jumped 17.33 in qualifying only to foul out in the final. Sands, 27th last time with 16.35, held on to the Bronze medal ahead of Giralt. Same as last year, it was Évora who timed his season best. He had placed 5th in the European Indoors (16.97) while Idowu won with 17.56, but at the World Champs he won with a lifetime best of 17.74 while Idowu came 6th (17.09). At this year's World Indoors Idowu won with his best-ever 17.75, with Évora 3rd at 17.27. The standard in the qualifying round (where the jumpers were in the shade of the stand) reached an all-time high as 12 men reached the automatic standard of 17.10 and 4 others jumped 17m or more but without advancing (the previous most over 17m in any competition was 10 in the final of the 1993 World Champs).

"I would have liked to go into the London 2012 Olympics as defending champion, and I can't believe I'm standing here disappointed with Silver, but I am," said Idowu. "I can't complain with the Silver but I'm a winner and I had been undefeated coming into this. This is the one I didn't want to lose." Évora gasped: "I can't believe it yet. This is the turning point of my life. My dream is realized today."

Triple Jump, (Q 17.10 18th, F 21st)

1. Nelson Évora POR, 17.34/1.1q, 17.67/1.1, (17.31/-0.5, 17.56/0.0, x, 17.67, 17.24/0.4, 16.52/0.5); 2. Phillips Idowu GBR, 17.44/1.0, 17.62/0.9, (17.51/-0.3, 17.31/0.0, 17.62, x, 17.26/0.2, 16.41/0.2); 3. Leevan Sands BAH, 17.25/0.5, 17.59/0.9, (16.91, 16.55, 17.59, 17.26/1.1, 17.32/0.5, x); 4. David Giralt CUB, 17.30/0.9, 17.52/0.2, (17.27/-0.5, 17.52, 17.24/1.0, 17.48/1.6, x, 17.08/0.3); 5. Marian Oprea ROU, 17.17/-0.7, 17.22/-0.2, (17.22, x, x, x, 16.69); 6. Jadel Gregorio BRA, 17.15/0.4, 17.20/0.2, (17.14/-0.7, 16.55, 13.79, 16.83, 16.78, 17.20); 7. Larry Achike GBR, 17.18/1.1, 17.17/-0.2, (16.74, x, 17.17, x, 17.04/-0.2, x); 8. Viktor Kuznetsov UKR, 17.11/0.1, 16.87/-0.3; 9. Igor Spasovkhodskiy RUS, 17.23/0.4, 16.79/-0.6; 10. Li Yanxi CHN, 17.30/0.6, 16.77/1.2

Shot Put

On paper the shot looked set to be an American clean sweep by Nelson (22.12 this summer), Hoffa (22.10) and Cantwell (21.76) unless 2003 world champion Mikhnevich could reproduce the form he displayed in Minsk in his last competition (22.00). But the USA took just one medal, a Silver for world indoor champion Cantwell with a fairly modest 21.09. Nelson, who had finished first or second (usually second) in every Olympics and World Champs since 2000, experienced a nightmare of a competition. Handicapped by a rib injury he failed to register a mark in the final, his first two throws landing outside the sector and committing a foot

fault with his third. Hoping to atone for his miserable Olympic experience in 2004, when he failed to make the final with 19.40, world champion Hoffa was also out of sorts, reaching 20.53 for 7th.

The revelation of the contest was Poland's 2.04m tall Majewski (26), clearly a man for the big occasion. He set a pb of 20.87 for 5th in Osaka last year, improved to 20.93 for the World Indoor bronze and to 20.97 behind Hoffa and Nelson in London on July 25 but was only 10th-ranked among the Beijing entrants. In the qualifying round he broke through the 21m barrier at last, his 21.04 being 48 cm ahead of the next best, Nelson. Only six men made the automatic standard of 20.40 and notable non-qualifiers included Scott, Martin and Sack, all of whom had bettered 21m this season, but 20.01 was the best ever non-qualifying mark at a championship.

Majewski, who uses the glide technique, overtook Mikhnevich (20.73) for the lead with his opening 20.80 but in the second round he fell back to 4th as Mikhnevich registered 21.05, Cantwell 20.98 and Armstrong a Canadian record of 21.04. In round 3 Lyzhyn, with a pb, matched Cantwell's 20.98 but a few minutes later Majewski shot from 5th to first with 21.21 and with his next throw he made another massive improvement, to 21.51, to become the second Pole (after the late Wladyslaw Komar in 1972 and 10 years to the day after Komar's death) to become Olympic shot champion. Meanwhile a great scrap ensued for the other medals. Entering the final round Mikhnevich was still 2nd (21.05) and Armstrong 3rd (21.04) but Cantwell's final effort of 21.09 knocked the Canadian off the rostrum.

Shot, (Q 20.40 & F 15th)

1. Tomasz Majewski POL, 21.04q, 21.51 (20.80, 20.47, 21.21, 21.51, x, 20.44); 2. Christian Cantwell USA, 20.48, 21.09, (20.39, 20.98, 20.88, 20.86, 20.69, 21.09); 3. Andrey Mikhnevich BLR, 20.48, 21.05, (20.73, 21.05, x, 20.78, 20.57, 20.93); 4. Dylan Armstrong CAN, 20.43, 21.04, (20.62, 21.04, x, x, 20.47, x); 5. Pavel Lyzhyn BLR, 20.36, 20.98, (20.33, 20.15, 20.98, 20.98, 20.40, x); 6. Yuriy Belonog UKR, 20.16, 20.63, (20.63, x, 20.53, 20.46, 20.31, x); 7. Reese Hoffa USA, 20.41, 20.53; 8. Pavel Sofyin RUS, 20.29, 20.42; 9. Rutger Smith NED, 20.13, 20.41; 10. Yuriy Belov BLR, 20.12, 20.06

Discus

The shock of the qualifying round was the departure of Iran's Asian record holder Hadadi, fourth on the world year list with 69.32 and with three wins out of three against Kanter and two from two vs. Alekna (but he had not competed since June 3). He mustered only 61.34 for 17th place and faring even worse was U.S. champion Waltz (68.90 this season), 25th with 60.02. The final was expected to turn into another Kanter vs. Alekna duel for supremacy, but there was an intruder by the name of Malachowski, who ranked seventh on this year's list with 68.65. Inspired by the exploit of his shot putting teammate Majewski, having led the qualifiers with 65.94, he set the pace with 66.45 in the first round and 67.82 in the second, to which the nearest approach was Harting's third round 67.09. At halfway Kanter was 3rd with 66.38 and Alekna 4th with 65.77.

It was in the fourth round that the two big guns fired at last. Alekna, now 36 and seeking a third Olympic crown, came within 3 cm of Malachowski's mark with 67.79 while Kanter (29) produced what proved to be the winning throw of 68.82, adding the Olympic Gold medal to last year's world title. Nothing significant occurred in the penultimate round but with their final throws both Harting and Alekna fell only a little way short of affect-

ing the final positions. Although thrilled by his victory, Kanter was less than enchanted by the length of his throws. "The Olympic title is the top of my career but it's not such a good result. I've been training pretty hard and this result doesn't really show my potential. My best chance was in the fifth round [he fouled], but that was during the women's 400m final so I had to take a break. I lost concentration." To the regret of those who favor a tougher line against convicted drugs cheats, the man who "won" in 2004 but was stripped of the title, Fazekas, was permitted to compete, placing an unwelcome 8th.

Discus, (Q 64.50 16th, F 19th)

1. Gerd Kanter EST, 64.66q, 68.82, (63.44, 66.38, 62.75, 68.82, x, 65.98); 2. Piotr Malachowski POL, 65.94, 67.82, (66.45, 67.82, 66.98, 63.91, 65.78, x); 3. Virgilijus Alekna LTU, 65.84, 67.79, (x, 65.77, 64.42, 67.79, x, 67.18); 4. Robert Harting GER, 64.19, 67.09, (65.58, 64.84, 67.09, x, x, 66.51); 5. Frank Casañas ESP, 64.99, 66.49, (59.54, 62.16, 64.46, 64.11, 64.97, 66.49); 6. Bogdan Pishchalnikov RUS, 64.60, 65.88, (64.09, 64.25, 61.13, 65.88, x, x); 7. Rutger Smith NED, 65.65, 65.39, (64.61, 65.31, 64.36, 64.25, x, 65.39); 8. Robert Fazekas HUN, 62.64, 63.43; 9. Mario Pestano ESP, 64.42, 63.42; 10. Rashid Al-Dosari QAT, 63.83, 62.55

Hammer

For the first time in Olympic hammer history five men threw beyond 80m, and for the first time in any athletics event a Slovenian was crowned Olympic champion. Who could have predicted back in 2000 in Sydney when Kozmus finished 38th out of 44 with 68.83 that one day he would become Olympic champion? He was 6th in Athens four years ago with 78.56, but displayed his true abilities at last year's World Champs when he led into the last round with 82.12 before being overtaken by Tikhon's final effort of 83.63. To his credit, Kozmus did not fold and responded with 82.29 for a valiant Silver medal. This season, Kozmus (28) was fifth ranked among the entrants with 81.46 behind Tikhon's 84.51, Pars' 81.96, defending champion Murofushi's 81.87 and Devyatovskiy's 81.70.

Pars led the qualifiers with 80.07 and amazingly the two Russians were outside the top 20. Kozmus landed the first 80m throw of the final, opening with 80.75, but, after close challenges by Tikhon (80.56) and Murofushi (80.71), Devyatovskiy snatched the lead in the second round with 81.61 ... only for Kozmus to reply immediately with what proved to be the winning throw of 82.02. Pars ended that round with 80.96 for 3rd place. Kozmus, who looked dissatisfied after each of his throws, maintained a brilliant standard with all six of his efforts beyond 80m, and the only change in positions came in the fifth round when Tikhon managed 81.51 to push Pars out of the medals.

Why did he look so glum after each throw? "I was really not happy with my technique, although I still managed to put together a fine series. The problem is the final part of my throw when releasing the hammer. I had difficulties with this all season so far." He added: "I thought I would need 83m at least for gold. And I expected Ivan Tikhon to throw this at some stage during the competition. That was why I was very nervous. But he cannot do this to me every time—beating me in the last round." In his press interview, Kozmus revealed that he was once a high jumper, clearing 1.84 when he weighed 68kg (as against today's 106kg), and that he became a hammer thrower after watching his sister, who set a Slovenian record of 58.60 in 2001.

Continued on next page

Hammer, (Q 78.00 15th, F 17th)

1. Primoz Kozmus SLO, 79.44q, 82.02, (80.75, 82.02, 80.79, 80.64, 80.98, 80.85); 2. Vadim Devyatovskiy BLR, 76.95, 81.61, (79.00, 81.61, x, x, 80.86, x); 3. Ivan Tikhon BLR, 79.26, 81.51, (78.49, 80.56, 79.59, 78.89, 81.51, 80.87); 4. Krisztián Pars HUN, 80.07, 80.96, (78.05, 80.96, x, 80.16, 80.11, 79.83); 5. Koji Murofushi JPN, 78.16, 80.71, (79.47, 80.71, 79.94, 77.96, 78.22, 77.26); 6. Olli-Pekka Karjalainen FIN, 77.07, 79.59; 7. Szymon Ziółkowski POL, 79.55, 79.22; 8. Libor Charfreitag SVK, 76.61, 78.65; 9. Markus Esser GER, 77.60, 77.10; 10. Andrés Haklitsi CRO, 77.12, 76.58

Javelin

Finland, the spiritual home of javelin throwing, has not produced an Olympic winner for 20 years and much was expected of world champion Pitkämäki. Finns actually filled three of the top five positions but the supreme honour eluded them as Pitkämäki's third place was the pick of the bunch. It was his great rival Thorkildsen (26) who captured all the glory, joining Eric Lemming, Jonni Myyrä and Jan Zelezny as men who have won more than one Olympic javelin title. Despite the still conditions he even broke Zelezny's formidable Olympic record of 90.17 from Sydney.

Although he threw only 79.85, playing safe on a wet runway, in the qualifying contest (main casualties being Sergey Makarov and yet again an impaired Breaux Greer, carrying a shoulder injury and newly broken right hand!) he immediately made his mark in the final. After Pitkämäki and his bulky compatriot Järvenpää had opened with 83.75 and 83.95, respectively, Thorkildsen responded with 84.72 before improving to 85.91 and his season's best of 87.93 in the next two rounds. Pitkämäki moved into 2nd with 85.83 in the fourth round but that was as close as he would get to the Norwegian, who in the fifth round delivered a mighty throw of 90.57, just over a metre short of his pb and the longest in the world this year. The big surprise, and a nasty shock for Järvenpää who had been in a medal position since the first round and suffered the frustration of fouling a throw in excess of 88m, came in the final round when Kovals, until that point 6th with 82.28, unleashed a pb throw of 86.64 to move to 2nd. Prior to Beijing his best this season had been only 80.24, ranking him 22nd among the entrants! Järvenpää could reply only with 83.63, while Pitkämäki had to settle for third despite improving slightly to 86.16.

Javelin, (Q 21st, F 23rd)

1. Andreas Thorkildsen NOR, 79.85q, 90.57*, (84.72, 85.91, 87.93, 85.13, 90.57, p); 2. Ainars Kovals LAT, 80.15, 86.64, (79.45, 82.63, 82.28, 78.98, 80.65, 86.64); 3. Tero Pitkämäki FIN, 82.61, 86.16, (83.75, x, 80.69, 85.83, x, 86.16); 4. Tero Järvenpää FIN, 82.34, 83.95; 5. Teemu Wirkkala FIN, 79.79, 83.46; 6. Jarrod Bannister AUS, 79.79, 83.45; 7. Ilya Korotkov RUS, 83.33, 83.15; 8. Vladimir Kozlov BLR, 80.06, 82.06; 9. Vadims Vasilievskis LAT, 83.51, 81.32; 10. Scott Russell CAN, 80.42, 80.90

Decathlon

Not since 1972 has the Olympic decathlon been won by such a wide margin as the 240 points advantage by Clay (28). He led all the way: by 19 points after a 10.44 100m in torrential rain, 34 after a 7.78 long jump, 145 after a pb (by 2 cm) shot of 16.27, 146 after a 1.99 high jump and 88 after a below-par 400m of 48.92. That gave the 2004 Olympic Silver medalist and 2005 world champion a first-day score of 4521. Kravchenko, the 2004 world junior champion who was more than anxious to atone for his 100m disqualification at last year's Worlds, was 2nd with 4433 including a shot pb and a near best in the 400m. Hardee, making his international debut, was a close third at 4428, making up for a weak shot

mark with a high jump pb. A surprising 4th was Kasyanov (4408), whose decathlon best was a modest 8086. Next came defending champion Sebrle (4312), far below his very best due to injury problems, Cuba's promising 20-year-old Suárez (4297) who set pbs in every event except the high jump, and Pogorelov (4283). A woeful shot put of 15.09 by Osaka Silver medalist Smith (who has a pb of 17.78 this year) put paid to his chances, while Olympic and World Champs Bronze medalist Karpov limped out of the contest after the 100m and 2003 world champion Pappas, suffering a foot injury, aborted during the long jump.

Weather conditions were much kinder for day two. A 13.93 110H extended Clay's lead over Kravchenko to 124, with Hardee just 4 points behind that. Kasyanov remained 4th but thanks to a near pb 14.15 Suárez moved up a place to 5th. Clay holds the world decathlon discus "record" and showed why with a dynamic throw of 53.79 which stretched his lead to 283. Kasyanov, who remarkably improved his best of 43.45 to 48.39 no less, was now 2nd with Kravchenko, who also set a pb, 3rd. Hardee dropped to 4th and Suarez to 7th. Hardee, a 5.30 performer failed his opening height of 4.70 in the pole vault, as Clay continued on his merry way with 5.00, the same height as Kravchenko and Pogorelov, and they were the top three after eight events: Clay 7365 now 316 clear of Kravchenko 7049 with Pogorelov 6979. Kasyanov, weak in this event (and the javelin) was now 4th ahead of Smith, Suárez and Sebrle.

Clay's lead widened to a stupendous 479 after the javelin (score of 8269), where 70.97 was not far off his pb of 72.00. The battle for the other medals was intense as Kravchenko had 7790 with Pogorelov and Suárez (who improved from 71.39 to 73.98) both on 7777. Clay's 1500m pb is 4:38.93 and if he ran 4:49.36 he would break Dan O'Brien's U.S. record of 8891. However, he chose to stay within his comfort zone, finishing 13th and last in his heat in 5:06.59 for 8791, the third highest score of his career. On paper it looked as though Suárez with a pb of 4:16.70 would get well clear of Kravchenko (4:24.44) and leapfrog into second place but Kravchenko ran his heart out to outkick his rival in 4:27.47, covering the final lap in close to 57 sec., a fantastic effort. His reward was a Silver medal and a score of 8551. Suárez (20) raised his Cuban record of 8451 to 8527 in winning Bronze at the expense of Pogorelov and is clearly a major star in the making. He had a best score of 7357 in 2006, 8156 last year. The gallant Sebrle (33) finished 6th with a season's best of 8241. He has now exceeded 8200 every year since 1996.

Decathlon, (21st-22nd)

1. Bryan Clay USA, 10.44/0.3, 7.78/0.0, 16.27, 1.99, 48.92, 8791, 13.93/-0.5, 53.79, 5.00, 70.97, 5:06.59; 2. Andrey Kravchenko BLR, 10.96/-0.2, 7.61/-0.2, 14.39, 2.11, 47.30, 8551, 14.21/-0.5, 44.58, 5.00, 60.23, 4:27.47; 3. Leonel Suárez CUB, 10.90/-0.6, 7.33/0.8, 14.49, 2.05, 47.91, 8527, 14.15/-0.5, 44.45, 4.70, 73.98, 4:29.17; 4. Aleksandr Pogorelov RUS, 11.07/-0.6, 7.37/0.6, 16.53, 2.08, 50.91, 8328, 14.47/-0.2, 50.04, 5.00, 64.01, 5:01.56; 5. Romain Barras FRA, 11.26/-0.1, 7.08/1.0, 15.42, 1.96, 49.51, 8253, 14.21/-0.2, 45.17, 5.00, 65.40, 4:29.29; 6. Román Sebrle CZE, 11.21/-0.6, 7.68/0.8, 14.78, 2.11, 49.54, 8241, 14.71/-0.4, 45.50, 4.80, 63.93, 4:49.63; 7. Oleksiy Kasyanov UKR, 10.53/0.3, 7.56/1.2, 15.15, 1.96, 47.70, 8238, 14.37/-0.2, 48.39, 4.30, 51.59, 4:28.94; 8. André Niklaus GER, 11.12/-0.6, 7.29/1.4, 13.23, 2.05, 49.65, 8220, 14.37/-0.2, 45.39, 5.20, 60.21, 4:32.90; 9. Maurice Smith JAM, 10.85/-0.2, 7.04/-0.8, 15.09, 1.99, 47.96, 8205, 14.08/-0.5, 50.91, 4.60, 51.52, 4:31.62; 10. Michael Schrader GER, 10.80/0.3, 7.70/-0.1, 13.67, 1.99, 48.47, 8194, 14.71/-0.4, 40.41, 4.80, 60.27, 4:26.77

4x100m

Jamaican sprinters continued their shock and awe campaign by breaking a world record which had stood for 16 years. No, they didn't just break it; they smashed it to smithereens. Ever since 1977 when the IAAF started ratifying 4x100m relay records to 1/100ths the times have come down gently: 38.03, 37.86, 37.83, 37.79, 37.67, 37.50, 37.40. Now Messrs, Carter, Frater, Bolt and Powell have contrived to take 0.30 off in one go with a startling 37.10. Mind you, there has never been a team to compare with it in terms of 100m best times: respectively 9.98, 9.97, 9.69 and 9.74. Thus, Bolt made further history by winning three Olympic Gold medals, each in world record time—a feat which may stand for eternity. Just as Jamaica had never before won the Olympic 100m title, so this was a first for the Caribbean island, the closest being second in 1984. In contrast to Britain's win by 0.01 over USA in Athens, this race produced the widest victory margin (0.96) since 1936 when Jesse Owens led off the U.S. foursome. Speaking of those teams, both the British and American squads failed to get the baton around in their heats. The Americans, had they reached the final, would probably have pressed Jamaica more closely than Trinidad did, while Britain could well have been in contention for a medal also as they were ahead of Jamaica (sans Bolt) at the final changeover when Pickering set off too early to receive the baton from Devonish. The U.S. had also messed up at the final exchange in their heat with Darvis Patton unable to get the baton to Tyson Gay. Of the 16 teams invited, no fewer than 4 were disqualified and another 4 failed to finish ... surely another world record!

In the final there were safe change-overs from the Jamaicans with the first two men handing Bolt a lead that he substantially enhanced with another stupefying bend run and then there was the glorious sight of Powell in full flight on the anchor leg. A. Lennart Julin analyzed times for Bolt 8.94 and Powell 8.73.

4 x 100 Meters Relay, (h 21st, F 22nd)

1. JAM, 1h2 38.31, 37.10* WR, Carter, Frater, Bolt, Powell, , , ht: Thomas, Frater, Carter, Powell; 2. TRI, 1h1 38.26, 38.06, Bledman, Burns, Callender, Thompson (ht. 3. Armstrong); 3. JPN, 2h1 38.52, 38.15, Tsukahara, Suetsugu, Takahira, Asahara; 4. BRA, 4h1 39.01, 38.24, de Lima, Viana, de Barros, Moreira, , ht: Moreira, de Barros, de Lima, Viana; 5. GER, 3h2 38.93, 38.58, Unger, Helmke, Kosenkow, Keller; 6. CAN, 2h2 38.77, 38.66, Palmer, Henry, Connaughton, Browne

4x400m

Fielding all three medalists from the 400m plus the 400m hurdles champion, the USA could hardly lose this race. It was more a question of whether they could threaten the newly reinstated world record of 2:54.29. With the two big guns, Merritt and Wariner, resting for the final (Clement and Witherspoon were deputized in the heats) it seemed a possibility. The USA cruised to victory in their heat in 2:59.98 while Britain and the Bahamas were quicker in theirs. Kévin Borlée of Belgium 44.25 and Denis Alekseyev of Russia 44.26 anchored their teams to national records with Andrae Williams of Bahamas sharing the fastest split in the heats at 44.25.

Predictably the Americans led from start to finish with Merritt opening with 44.35 for a 10m lead over Belgium. Next came Russia, Jamaica and Britain (Steele slower than in the heats). Taylor (43.70) ran superbly on the second leg but aston-

ishly lost a tiny amount of ground to Belgium's Jonathan Borlée, who ran 43.62—this by a man who was eliminated in the 400m semis in his best-ever time of 45.11! Some way back, the Bahamas (Mathieu) were 3rd just ahead of Jamaica (Chambers) and Russia (Frolov) with Britain dropping a place.

The "weakest link" in the USA team was Neville but he ran 44.16 on the third leg to extend the lead over this amazing Belgian team, the Bahamas retained 3rd while Russia (Kokorin) overtook Jamaica for 4th. Like Sanya Richards in the women's relay, Wariner had something to prove and—in glorious isolation—he produced the fastest split of 43.18 to anchor his team in the Olympic record time of 2:55.39, the second quickest officially recognized time in history. There was a tremendous battle for second. Belgium dropped back to 5th, still setting a national record of 2:59.37, and it was the Bahamas and Russia who fought it out with Brown prevailing in 2:58.03, just 0.03 ahead of a Russian record-breaking team anchored by Alekseyev in 43.56, an exceptional effort by someone whose best off blocks is only 45.35 and ran 45.52 in the heats here! Rooney (43.73) also had a great run, lifting Britain to 4th in 2:58.81, the best UK mark for 10 years. Times for places 4–8 were the best ever.

4 x 400 Meters Relay, (h 22nd, F 23rd)

1. USA, 1h1 2:59.98, 2:55.39*, Merritt 44.4, Taylor 43.7, Neville 44.16, Wariner 43.18, , ht: Neville 44.9, Clement 44.5, Witherspoon 44.63, Taylor 45.93; 2. BAH, 2h2 2:59.88, 2:58.03, Bain 45.9, Mathieu 44.1, A Williams 44.02, Brown 44.05, , ht: Mathieu 45.6, Moncur 44.9, Miller 45.10, A Williams 44.25; 3. RUS, 2h1 3:00.14, 2:58.06, Dyldin 45.5, Frolov 44.6, Kokorin 44.34, Alekseyev 43.56, , ht: Dyldin 45.6, Frolov 44.9, Kokorin 45.42, Alekseyev 44.26; 4. GBR, 1h2 2:59.33, 2:58.81, Steele 45.7, Tobin 44.8, Bingham 44.61, Rooney 43.73, , ht: Steele 45.3, Tobin 45.1, Bingham 44.50, Rooney 44.47; 5. BEL, 3h1 3:00.67, 2:59.37, K Borlée 45.4, J Borlée 43.6, Van Branteghem 44.44, Ghislain 45.88, , ht: Van Branteghem 45.5, J Borlée 44.7, Ghislain 46.16, K Borlée 44.25; 6. AUS, 4h1 3:00.68, 3:00.02, Wroe 46.1, Steffensen 45.3, Hill 44.41, Milburn 44.28, , ht: Milburn 45.0, Ormrod 45.4, Steffensen 45.46, Hill 44.87; 7. POL, 5h1 3:00.74, 3:00.32, Wieruszewski 46.0, Klimczak 44.5, Kedzia 45.10, Plawgo 44.66, , ht: Plawgo 45.9, Klimczak 45.0, Kedzia 45.95, Wieruszewski 44.42; 8. JAM, 3h2 3:00.09, 3:01.45, Blackwood 45.6, Chambers 44.5, Ayre 44.86, Spence 46.52, , ht: Blackwood 45.4, Fothergill 45.1, Ayre 45.01, Chambers 44.60

20K Walk

Although new world record-holder Sergey Morozov was a late withdrawal from the team, Russia still came up trumps as Valeriy Borchin became at 22 years and 44 days the youngest ever Olympic walking champion, displacing Jefferson Pérez who was 72 days older when he struck Goldin 1996. However, it was a victory which will not be celebrated by all. Borchin served a one-year drug ban in 2005–06 for taking the stimulant ephedrine, and the recent disclosure that Vladimir Kanaykin, Aleksey Voyevodin and Viktor Burayev (all, like Borchin, a member of Viktor Chegin's coaching squad in Saransk) had been provisionally suspended for EPO usage has cast a shadow over Russian walking methods.

Australia's Luke Adams, who was 6th, made his feelings clear in an interview with the Australian Associated Press. "The IOC really need to look at sanctioning Russia; they've just been disgraceful this year. So many positive drug tests and there is a coach there for the walks and he's had a lot of walkers test positive. He's still coaching, they're still walking and one of his athletes won the race. I think it's disgraceful."

Starting at 9 a.m. in bright sunshine, it was hot at 29°C but humidity was much lower than usual at 45% and the standard was the highest ever at the Olympics with six men inside 1:20, the pre-

vious best being three in 2000. Robert Korzeniowski's Olympic record from Sydney of 1:18:59 narrowly survived as Borchin, the 2006 European Silver medalist but a non-finisher in Osaka, had 10k splits of 40:43 and 38:18 for 1:19:01. There were 22 men within 2 seconds of Brugnetti's 40:42 lead at 10K but the top three had second 10ks in less than 39 mins.: Pérez 38:33 to add Olympic Silver to his collection of one Olympic Gold and three world titles (plus a Silver), and Tallent 38:59 for Bronze. Wang Hao, still a junior, celebrated his 19th birthday with a pb of 1:19:47 in 4th 4 sec. ahead of defending champion Brugnetti, who had led for much of the first three quarters of the race but eased up after receiving two yellow cards.

With exactly one hour on the clock, Pérez made a break, closely followed by Tallent, but at 16k (1:04:05) Borchin was in the lead ahead of Pérez and Tallent, and that's how it remained even though Borchin had received a warning in his decisive break after that. The race, which started and finished in the Bird's Nest, was staged over nine laps of a 2K course, the organisers having laid a 4mm thick rubberised surface over concrete. Borchin is the first Russian since Leonid Spirin in 1956 (the inaugural Olympic 20K walk) to win this event, the USSR's 1960 & 1968 champion Vladimir Golubnichiy being Ukrainian.

20 Kilometers Walk, (16th) 10 kilometer times in 2nd column

1. Valeriy Borchin RUS, 1:19:01, 40:43; 2. Jefferson Pérez ECU, 1:19:15, 40:42; 3. Jared Tallent AUS, 1:19:42, 40:43; 4. Wang Hao CHN-J, 1:19:47, 40:43; 5. Ivano Brugnetti ITA, 1:19:51, 40:42; 6. Luke Adams AUS, 1:19:57, 40:42; 7. Francisco J. Fernández ESP, 1:20:32, 40:42; 8. Robert Heffernan IRL, 1:20:36, 40:42; 9. Luis F. López COL, 1:20:53, 40:43; 10. Chu Yafei CHN, 1:21:17, 40:43

50K Walk

Ever since last year Schwazer has berated himself for following instructions to settle for Bronze rather than bid for victory in Osaka. This time there was no compromise as on a hot morning (rising to 28°C) he broke the Olympic record with 3:37:09. He was always among the leaders and picked off 10K splits of 44:40, 42:59, 43:00 and 43:57. He shared the lead with world record holder and 2004 Silver medalist Nizhegorodov, Li Jianbo and 20K Bronze medalist Tallent through to 30K. European champion Diniz dropped back after 20K and eventually retired, the victim of stomach pain and hamstring strain, at around 33k. At 40k Schwazer, Tallent and Nizhegorodov were together in 2:54:36, some 2 min clear, and the break from Schwazer came soon afterwards. The 23 year-old Italian from the South Tyrol built up a 40 sec. lead over the other two by 45k (3:15:57), not surprising as he sped through that 5k in a murderous 21:21. He never let up and with a fabulous 21:12 final 5k won by over 2 min from Tallent (who set a pb of 3:39:27) with the Russian third. Schwazer covered that final 10k in 42:33, Talbot 44:51, Nizhegorodov 45:38. Li paid for his attempt to stay with the medalists by finishing 14th, taking a painful 55:46 for the last 10k. Garcia finished well (44:32), moving up from 14th at 20k, 11th at 30k and 8th at 40k to end up 4th ahead of pbs by Tysse and Nava. 27 men broke 4 hours, matching the Olympic record set in 1988.

Schwazer, who covered the first half in 1:49:00 and the second in 1:48:09, received one warning for loss of contact, while Tallent was cautioned for a bent knee and Nizhegorodov for both infractions. The

winner, who trains up to 280K a week, is coached by Sandro Damilano, whose younger brother Maurizio was Olympic 20K champion in 1980. Canadian Tim Berrett competed at his fifth Games.

50 Kilometers Walk, (22nd) 30 kilometer times in 2nd column

1. Alex Schwazer ITA, 3:37:09*, 2:10:39; 2. Jared Tallent AUS, 3:39:27, 2:10:38; 3. Denis Nizhegorodov RUS, 3:40:14, 2:10:39; 4. Jesús Angel García ESP, 3:44:08, 2:15:36; 5. Erik Tysse NOR, 3:45:08, 2:16:16; 6. Horacio Nava MEX, 3:45:21, 2:15:35; 7. Yuki Yamazaki JPN, 3:45:47, 2:13:29; 8. Rafał Fedaczyński POL, 3:46:51, 2:18:52; 9. Grzegorz Sudoł POL, 3:47:18, 2:13:28; 10. Luke Adams AUS, 3:47:45, 2:15:51

Women 100m

What an amazing 24 hours for Jamaican sprinting. The evening after Usain Bolt's 100m exploit, Fraser became the first Jamaican winner of the women's 100m, a feat which had so narrowly eluded Juliet Cuthbert in 1992 and Merlene Ottey in 1996—although it's feasible that Tayna Lawrence, who crossed the line third in 2000 behind Marion Jones and Ekaterini Thánou, might yet wind up with a retrospective gold. Better still for Jamaica (with a population of less than 3 million), all three medals went to their representatives, another Olympic first for the women's 100m. The last time there was a clean sweep in the men's 100m was back in 1912 by the USA.

Like Bolt, the 1.60m (5ft 3in) Fraser (21) has made staggering progress this year. Her best prior to 2008 was 11.31 (11.21w) and after a slight improvement to 11.28 she first caused a stir by finishing second to Stewart in the Jamaican Champs in 10.85 after an 11.02 heat. She had another fine run in London, with 10.95, but her final race for Beijing had been a poor one, 8th in Monaco in 11.36. However, at the Games she simply looked better and ran faster with each round: 11.35 heat, 11.06 quarter-final and 11.00 semi prior to a scintillating performance in the final which she won by a clear two meters in 10.78 (0.190 reaction time), matching the world's fastest time this year by Edwards, who finished last on this occasion after hesitating at the start thinking she had beaten the gun. With Williams 4th and Lee 5th the U.S. challenge was crushed as Simpson and Stewart dead-heated for the Silver medal, the judges being unable to separate them as they both ran 10.979. Britain's first finalist in this event since 1984, Kwakyee reduced her pb from 11.26 to 11.18 in her quarter-final and 11.14 in the final to rank third on the UK all-time list.

100 Metres, (h, qf 16th; sf, F 17th)

1. Shelly-Ann Fraser JAM, 1h6 11.35, 1q1 11.06, 1s1 11.00, 10.78; 2= Kerron Stewart JAM, 1h10 11.28, 1q4 10.98, 1s2 11.05, 10.98; 2= Sherone Simpson JAM, 3h9 11.48, 1q2 11.02, 4s1 11.11, 10.98; 4. Lauryn Williams USA, 2h2 11.38, 2q4 11.07, 3s1 11.10, 11.03; 5. Muna Lee USA, 1h3 11.33, 2q2 11.08, 2s1 11.06, 11.07; 6. Jeanette Kwakyee GBR, 2h1 11.30, 3q1 11.18, 3s2 11.19, 11.14; 7. Debbie Ferguson-McKenzie BAH, 2h8 11.17, 1q3 11.21, 4s2 11.22, 11.19; 8. Torri Edwards USA, 1h1 11.26, 1q5 11.31, 2s2 11.18, 11.20; Chandra Sturup BAH, 1h4 11.30, 3q2 11.16, 5s1 11.22; Yuliya Nesterenko BLR, 2h5 11.40, 4q4 11.14, 5s2 11.26

200m

The Jamaican humiliation of the usually all-conquering American sprinters continued. Following Bolt's epic double and a clean sweep of the medals in the women's 100m, it was the turn of Campbell-Brown (26) to rub salt into the wounds. Until a few weeks ago there had been a general assumption that Felix would be one of the glittering stars of Beijing with the possibility that she could collect Goldmedals in the 200m and both relays. Recently,

Continued on next page

though, her best form had seemed to desert her. She ran a relatively lackluster 400m in Stockholm followed by a heavy defeat over 200m in London (4th in 23.00). In contrast, Jamaica's defending champion couldn't put a foot wrong. After taking the Jamaican title in 21.94 she ran 21.98 in Barcelona and beat Fraser (to be crowned Olympic champion a few weeks later) over 100m in 10.87.

Their paths crossed in the Olympic quarter-final, Campbell-Brown finishing a tenth ahead in 22.64, but both won their semis Campbell-Brown in 22.19 and Felix in 22.33. The final proved no contest. Off to a much faster start, Campbell-Brown built up a two metre lead over Stewart entering the finishing straight and held it all to retain her title in a magnificent pb of 21.74—the world's fastest time since the discredited Marion Jones ran 21.62 at altitude in 1998 or since Gwen Torrence's 21.72 in 1992. For a while it looked as though it might be a Jamaican 1–2 but Felix came from some way back to overtake Stewart and produce her season's best time of 21.93 for Silver (as in 2004) despite her gait supporting rumors of a hip problem. Stewart managing to conserve Bronze inches ahead of Lee, whose 22.01 was a pb, as was Hooker's 22.34 just in front of a fast closing Simpson. The only other woman to win two Olympic 200m titles is Bärbel Wöckel (née Eckert) of the GDR—and all that represents—in 1976 and 1980. Although still only third on the Jamaican all-time list behind Merlene Ottey (21.64) and Grace Jackson (21.72), Campbell-Brown is now equal eighth fastest of all time. Athens Bronze medalist Ferguson-McKenzie (32) reached both the 100m and 200m finals, as she had also in 2000 and 2004, and even Merlene Ottey was never a double finalist in those events three times in a row.

200 Metres, (h & qf 19th, sf 20th, F 21st)

1. Veronica Campbell-Brown JAM, 1h5 23.04, 1q1 22.64, 1s1 22.19, 21.74; 2. Allyson Felix USA, 1h1 23.02, 2q1 22.74, 1s2 22.33, 21.93; 3. Kerron Stewart JAM, 3h4 23.03, 2q3 22.74, 2s1 22.29, 22.00; 4. Muna Lee USA, 1h2 22.71, 2q4 22.83, 3s1 22.29, 22.01; 5. Marshvet Hooker USA, 1h3 23.07, 3q3 22.76, 2s2 22.50, 22.34; 6. Sherone Simpson JAM, 2h6 22.94, 1q4 22.60, 3s2 22.50, 22.36; 7. Debbie Ferguson-McKenzie BAH, 2h3 23.22, 3q1 22.77, 4s1 22.51, 22.61; 8. Cydonie Mothersill CAY, 3h2 22.76, 4q1 22.83, 4s2 22.61, 22.68; Yuliya Chermoshanskaya RUS, 4h2 22.98, 1q3 22.63, 5s1 22.57; Muriel Hurtis-Houairi FRA, 2h2 22.72, 2q2 22.99, 5s2 22.71

400m

Just seven British women have been crowned Olympic champion: Mary Rand (LJ) and Ann Packer (800m) in 1964, Mary Peters (pentathlon) in 1972, Tessa Sanderson (JT) in 1984, Sally Gunnell (400mH) in 1992, Denise Lewis (heptathlon) in 2000 and Kelly Holmes (800m & 1500m) in 2004. Make that eight. Going one better than Packer in 1964 and Lillian Board in 1968, both of whom finished an agonisingly close Silver medalist at 400m, Ohuruogu (24) ran a brilliantly judged race to add the Olympic title to her 2006 Commonwealth and 2007 World titles. Richards has on many occasions run faster than Ohuruogu's world-leading winning time of 49.62 (0.01 slower than her pb in Osaka) but she has yet to win a global title and Ohuruogu now has two. Richards, 6th at the 2004 Games and 2nd in the 2005 World Champs, this time placed 3rd after entering the finishing straight with a substantial lead.

Richards said: "I felt really good. I thought I ran the first 200 really under control. I felt really strong. I started working the curve, and I came off in good position. I got to about 320 and my right

hamstring kind of grabbed. From there on my legs just got really heavy. I knew that Goldwas mine. I knew I was going to run 48 sec. [i.e. sub-49]. I felt so good. I was already getting elated coming off the turn because I knew how my races had been going. My hamstring just really let me down. I just feel like I've worked so hard in vain."

The winner, who was 6th at 250m and 4th at 300m before overtaking the Russian pair of Firova and Gushchina and then the flagging Richards some 30m from the finish, viewed the race from a different perspective. "I am just so proud of myself. I know I can perform well when I need to. I may not have a good season but, like at the World Championships, that's what I train all year for. It's not luck. I worked damn hard for this. The 400m race is very hard. It's not about the fastest, it's about keeping it together. I just knew I had to fight her [Richards] from behind, always. I may not be fast, but I fight."

Richards posted the fastest times in the heats (50.54) and semis (49.90 after a very fast start), looking very relaxed. Ohuruogu won her races in 51.00 and a season's best of 50.14, while next quickest was Shericka Williams. The two major casualties in the semis were last year's World Champs Silver and Bronze medalists, Sanders (season's best) and Novlene Williams while U.S. 3rd-placer Deedee Trotter was carrying an injury. In the final, Richards (lane 7) entered the straight some 4m up on the Russian pair (lanes 3 and 5) but as they started to flail so Ohuruogu (14) sailed through serenely with Williams (16) in her slipstream moving from 5th to 2nd with a big pb of 49.69. Gushchina (2nd at 200m and 300m) ran a pb for 4th just ahead of Kapachinskaya.

Ohuruogu said: "The thing is with how I run is that if you are going to beat me, you have to fight me very hard. My coach Lloyd Cowan has always said to me that the race is going to be won in the last 50m. If you can just keep your cool, keep your composure for the last 50m, that's when people start dying and he knows that I don't start dying—that's how I run and it works for me. My coach has always said to me you don't train for Grand Prix, you don't train for Trials, you train for three championship days. As long as you get through the rounds and get to the final, it's not about who's fastest or strongest it's about greatest will—that's what my coach says."

400 Metres, (h 16th, sf 17th, F 19th)

1. Christine Ohuruogu GBR, 1h4 51.00, 1s1 50.14, 49.62; 2. Shericka Williams JAM, 1h7 50.57, 2s1 50.28, 49.69; 3. Sanya Richards USA, 1h5 50.54, 1s2 49.90, 49.93; 4. Yuliya Gushchina RUS, 2h4 51.18, 1s3 50.48, 50.01; 5. Anastasiya Kapachinskaya RUS, 1h3 51.32, 2s2 50.30, 50.03; 6. Tatyana Firova RUS, 2h7 50.59, 3s1 50.31, 50.11; 7. Rosemarie Whyte JAM, 1h1 51.00, 3s3 50.63, 50.68; 8. Amanthe Montsho BOT, 2h2 50.91, 2s3 50.54, 51.18; Nicola Sanders GBR, 2h6 51.81, 4s3 50.71; Libania Grenot ITA, 1h2 50.87, 5s3 50.83

800

Not since Ann Packer, crowned champion in 1964 in her first and only season at 800m, has anyone reached the summit of two-lap racing as quickly as 18-year-old Jelimo. Her first race at the distance was a 2:01.02 victory in Nairobi on April 19 and she has remained undefeated, running 1:58.70 for the African title and 1:55.76 in Hengelo in May, 1:54.99 in Berlin and 1:55.41 in Oslo in June, 1:57.71 in the Kenyan trials, 1:55.69 in Rome and 1:54.97 in Paris in July. Now she has reduced the world junior, African and Commonwealth record yet again to 1:54.87, the fastest time in the world for 11 years and ranking her fifth

on the world all-time list. In so doing she has become the first Kenyan woman to lift an Olympic title in any event, near misses having been scored by Silver medalists Pauline Konga (1996, 5000m), Isabella Ochichi (2004 5000m), Catherine Ndereba (2004, and 2008 marathon) and Eunice Jepkorir (2008, 3000mSC). Not surprisingly she has become the youngest-ever winner of this title.

For about the only time in her brief career, Jelimo was content to take part in a slow race in her heat (but with a 28.78 final 200m) but in her semi she went through in 57.93 and 87.39 for a 1:57.31 clocking. The other semis were also won in quick times by athletes leading most of the way, Klyuka and world champion Jepkosgei, who slightly outdid Jelimo with splits of 56.10 and 1:26.50 en route to her season's best of 1:57.28. In the final Jelimo predictably went off very fast, but not quick enough for Jepkosgei who apparently covered the first 200m in 26.4! Jelimo went narrowly ahead just before 400m, reached in an exciting 55.41, with Sinclair (who would pay for her daring) a detached third only six meters behind. Jelimo raced past 600m in 1:24.03 (1:52 pace) and was around ten meters clear of Jepkosgei entering the finishing straight, a margin she held to the finish. That final 200m took 30.84 but at no time did Jelimo tie up and Kratochvilová's 1983 world record of 1:53.28 is no longer looking quite so impregnable. That most canny of racers, Benhassi, finished strongly as usual to pick up another medal to add to those from the 2004 Olympics and last two World Champs. Contesting her fifth consecutive Olympic final (and in her sixth and last Games), 35 year-old Mutola placed a worthy 5th in 1:57.68, her 197th time inside 2 min. since 1991!

800 Metres, (h 15th, sf 16th, F 18th)

1. Pamela Jelimo KEN-J, 1h3 2:03.18, 1s2 1:57.31, 1:54.87 WJR, Comm, Afr rec; 2. Janeth Jepkosgei KEN, 1h6 1:59.72, 1s3 1:57.28, 1:56.07; 3. Hasna Benhassi MAR, 2h5 2:00.51, 2s2 1:58.03, 1:56.73; 4. Svetlana Klyuka RUS, 1h1 2:01.67, 1s1 1:58.31, 1:56.94; 5. Maria Mutola MOZ, 1h4 1:58.91, 2s1 1:58.61, 1:57.68; 6. Kenia Sinclair JAM, 2h3 2:03.76, 4s3 1:58.28, 1:58.24; 7. Yuliya Krevsun UKR, 1h2 2:00.21, 2s3 1:57.32, 1:58.73; 8. Tatyana Andrianova RUS, 2h2 2:00.31, 3s3 1:58.16, 2:02.63; Yekaterina Kostetskaya RUS, 3h5 2:00.54, 3s2 1:58.33; Zuliya Calatayud CUB, 1h5 2:00.34, 4s2 1:58.78

1500m

With no fewer than four of the world's top 1500m runners originally selected (Soboleva, Tomashova and Fomenko of Russia, Yordanova of Bulgaria) on suspension for drug offenses there was always scope for surprises, but few would have guessed that the overwhelming favorite, world champion Jamal, would crack and finish out of the medals. Jamal looked untroubled in her heat, covering the last 300m in 46.34 to win in 4:05.14. In a much slower second heat (4:13.60) Lishchynska kicked in a 43.19 final 300 (the seemingly strong contender Gelete Burka being eliminated), while Lagat generated a 45.62 split in taking the third heat in 4:03.02 with Dobriskey setting an official pb of 4:03.22, having recently run 4:00.64 in a mixed race.

The final started slowly with Alminova leading through laps of 65.90 and 67.80, but burst into life when Jamal—riskily as it would turn out—began her strike with almost 500m to run. Followed by Lagat, she covered the third lap in 62.71 with Lishchynska third and Dobriskey, who ran a typically British inept tactical race, caught napping boxed-in back in eighth. However, Jamal started to run out of steam along the final back straight and Lagat went past with 200m remaining, entering the

final straight with a 5m advantage which she doubled by the finish as Jamal 'died' and finished 5th. Her time was a pb of 4:00.23 with the final 300m covered in 43.82. The Ukrainian pair of Lishchynska and Tobias (with a pb) picked up the other medals with Commonwealth champion Dobriskey ("I left it too late") finishing faster than anybody for a frustrating 4th place.

So who is Nancy Jebet Lagat, who became just the second Kenyan woman, after Jelimo in the 800, to win an Olympic title? Now 27 (her birthday was one day before the final) she is a former prodigy who at 16 was second in the 1998 World Junior 800 and was champion two years later. Her 1500m pb was 4:02.31 from 2005 and this year she had run no faster than 4:03.80 when finishing a distant 2nd to Burka at the Pre Classic in Eugene. Later, at the Kenyan Trials she only just scraped into the team after placing third in 4:14.09!

1500 Metres, (h 21st, F 23rd)

1. Nancy Chebet Lagat KEN, 1h3 4:03.02, 4:00.23; 2. Iryna Lishchynska UKR, 1h2 4:13.60, 4:01.63; 3. Nataliya Tobias UKR, 2h3 4:03.19, 4:01.78; 4. Lisa Dobriskey GBR, 3h3 4:03.22, 4:02.10; 5. Maryam Jamal BRN, 1h1 4:05.14, 4:02.71; 6. Natalia Rodriguez ESP, 2h1 4:05.30, 4:03.19; 7. Shannon Rowbury USA, 4h3 4:03.89, 4:03.58; 8. Iris Fuentes-Pila ESP, 2h2 4:14.10, 4:04.86; 9. Anna Mishchenko UKR, 4h1 4:05.61, 4:05.13; 10. Siham Hilali MAR, 3h1 4:05.36, 4:05.57

5000m

The 10,000m Goldmedallist Tirunesh Dibaba made history by winning a second Olympic title, this time over 1000m. Well, officially it was the 5000m she won, but disappointingly the field ambled around until the 11th lap and only then did the race really start. The kilometer splits were absurd: 3:39.20, 3:06.21, 3:12.72, 3:06.64 and, wait for it, 2:36.63!

The race was one of the most eagerly anticipated of the Games, bringing together Ethiopia's two superstars, world record-holder Dibaba and defending champion Defar, for their first encounter for two years. They are the two fastest ever at 14:11.15 and 14:12.88 respectively and the supporting cast was impressive, including third to fifth on the all-time list in Cheruiyot (14:22.51), European record holder Shobukhova (14:23.75) and ex-world record holder Abeylegesse (14:24.68). Considering the well known finishing speed of the Ethiopian pair, not to mention Abeylegesse, one might have thought someone would ensure a fast pace in an attempt (admittedly doomed probably) to blunt those fearsome kicks; at least those out of the medals would have the possible consolation of national records or pbs. But no, the first lap took 82.6 and it got slower still during the opening five minutes of the race (90.73 to 1000m!). Bizarrely, the leader at 3000m was Galkina in 9:58.13—almost a full minute slower than her world record for the steeplechase. At 4000m (13:04.77) Dibaba and Galkina shared the lead with ten others still in contention, and it was with a little over 800m to go that 10,000m runner-up Abeylegesse made a dash for it. Race on. That lap was covered in 66.73, followed by a 64.42 and at the bell Dibaba led narrowly from Defar and Abeylegesse. That was still the order with 200 to go, each a stride apart, but over the last half lap Dibaba kicked away, covering the final 400 in 59.54 and 800 in 2:03.96 (a pb?), while around the last turn Abeylegesse overtook Defar, who said she suffered pain in the lower part of her right leg during the last few laps.

5000 Metres, (h 19th, F 22nd)

1. Tirunesh Dibaba ETH, 1h1 15:09.89, 15:41.40; 2. Elvan Abeylegesse TUR, 5h2 14:58.79, 15:42.74; 3. Meseret Defar ETH, 1h2 14:56.32, 15:44.12; 4. Sylvia Kibet KEN, 2h1 15:10.37, 15:44.96; 5. Vivian Cheruiyot KEN, 2h2 14:57.27, 15:46.32; 6. Liliya Shobukhova RUS, 3h2 14:57.77, 15:46.62; 7. Alemitu Bekele TUR, 3h1 15:10.92, 15:48.48; 8. Meselech Melkamu ETH, 4h1 15:11.21, 15:49.03; 9. Kara Goucher USA, 7h2 15:00.98, 15:49.39; 10. Shalane Flanagan USA, 6h2 14:59.69, 15:50.80

10,000

After the greatest women's 10,000m duel in history both Tirunesh Dibaba and Elvan Abeylegesse ducked under 30 min to become the second and third-fastest performers of all time—although the quickest time ever seen in Beijing remains Wang Junxia's still-controversial 29:31.78 from 1993. Much of the credit for the brilliant times of 29:54.66 (Olympic and African record) and 29:56.34 (European record by the Ethiopian-born Turk, surpassing Paula Radcliffe's 30:01.09) should go to Kenyan-born Dutchwoman Kiplagat who, feeling her best chance of blunting Dibaba's fabulous kick would be to make it a fast race, led throughout the first six kilometers with splits of 3:00.46, 2:59.69, 3:03.68, 3:02.77, 3:03.38 (15:09.98 at halfway with Tufa second) and 3:02.87.

Even that was not hot enough a pace for former world 5000m record holder Abeylegesse, who in Osaka last year had placed second to Dibaba in a slow race (31:55.41-31:59.40) in which Dibaba had kicked home with a 60.14 last lap. Abeylegesse went ahead at 6400m, by when Tufa was dropped, and reeled off the next three kilometers in 3:01.61, 2:54.94 and 2:56.62! The Kenyan pair of Masai and Wangui tried to stay with the leading duo after Kiplagat slipped back but before 8K Abeylegesse and the slightly taller Dibaba were well clear. While they fought it out up front, U.S. record-holder Flanagan (who was born in high altitude Boulder, CO) moved into third with two laps remaining and, to her astonishment as well as delight, she emulated the achievement of Goucher in last year's World Champs by taking the Bronze medal. In doing so she set a North American record of 30:22.22 in her first year at the event, and yet she had been a questionable starter as three days earlier she had been sick with food poisoning and had continued to suffer gastrointestinal problems. She inherited good genes as her mother, the former Cheryl Bridges, set a world marathon best in 1971. Masai (18), the sister of 26:49.20 performer Moses Masai, went on to finish 4th with a world junior and Kenyan senior record of 30:26.50 and there were pbs also by Konovalova, Wangui, Goucher, Pavey (also lapped by the two leaders) and Mockenhaupt.

Abeylegesse ran a gutsy race, leading by a stride at the bell, and even when Dibaba struck with over 300m to go she managed to stay close for a while. But along the backstraight Dibaba (23), who was Bronze medallist at 5000m in Athens, really showed her paces and she sped around the last lap in 60.39 to win by a dozen metres. Dibaba ran her final 800m in 2:04.1, 1000m in 2:48.64 and mile in 4:36.4. She ran the second 5000m in just 14:44.68 and the last 3000m in 8:40.20.

Fortunately the conditions were good at 26°C and 53% humidity, and there were best ever times for places 2, 10-11, 13, 18-19, 23, 25-26 and 28-29. Fukushi also held the previous record for

11th at 2005 Worlds (31:03.75!), a race which had very similar depth of times (20 under 32 mins).

10,000 Metres, (15th)

1. Tirunesh Dibaba ETH, 29:54.66* Afr rec; 2. Elvan Abeylegesse TUR, 29:56.34 Eur rec; 3. Shalane Flanagan USA, 30:22.22 N.Am rec; 4. Linet Masai KEN-J, 30:26.50 WJR; 5. Mariya Konovalova RUS, 30:35.84; 6. Inga Abitova RUS, 30:37.33; 7. Lucy Wangui KEN, 30:39.96; 8. Lornah Kiplagat NED, 30:40.27; 9. Kim Smith NZL, 30:51.00; 10. Kara Goucher USA, 30:55.16

Marathon

Recognised as the most daring, or impetuous, of marathoners, Tomescu has often paid a heavy price for her tactics. She held a nearly-2 minute lead before halfway in the 2001 World Champs, only to finish 10th; she was 32 sec. clear after just 5K in the 2003 Worlds but eventually failed to finish; at the 2004 Olympics she was up with the leaders at halfway in 74:02 before clocking a painful second half of 83:29 to end up 20th; while in Chicago in 2006 she sped through the first half in a pb 68:07, built up a lead of over two minutes and yet ultimately placed 5th. However, on other occasions her judgment was spot on, as when she won Chicago in 2004 and the world half marathon title in 2005 and she ran 2:21:30 when 2nd in Chicago in 2005. In Beijing she reaped the ultimate reward on account of her boldness.

She made a break nearing halfway, reached in a cautious 75:11, and went on to build up a lead of over a minute before the pursuing pack—leaving it far too late—started to make inroads. The Romanian covered the second half, running solo, in an impressive 71:33 to become at 38 the oldest ever Olympic marathon champion. That will be the age in London 2012 of world record holder Radcliffe who pluckily completed the race in 23rd place despite acute leg problems arising from the stress fracture to the left thigh which so severely curtailed her preparations three months ago. Despite the weather being much kinder than anticipated (22°C at the 7.30 am start) there were 12 non-finishers, including such distinguished names as Wami, Adere, Tosa (who ran on in agony for several miles before quitting), Bogomolova and Kastor (who sustained a broken right foot at 5K). Mizuki Noguchi, the 2004 champion, withdrew a few days earlier because of injury.

The early pace was very slow with Yelling (who later sustained a nasty fall) in front at 10K in 36:10. The second 10K took 35:17 before Tomescu covered the third in a swift 33:37 to 30K in 1:45:04, 57 sec. clear of Komu, Zhou, Timofeyeva and Zhu, with Yamauchi, Ait Salem, Kosgei, Tune, Simon, Radcliffe and Ndereba (who ran just behind the lead pack for much of the race) a further second behind. A couple of kilometers later Radcliffe slipped out of contention and at 35K Tomescu (2:02:00) had stretched her lead over a pack of eight runners to 70 sec. One might have thought that someone would set off in pursuit, but nobody did and with every passing kilometer the Gold medal was becoming more and more of a certainty for the Romanian. At 40K her time was 2:19:07 (34:03 for that 10k) with Zhou and Zhu on 2:20:07, Ndereba and Komu 2:20:08, Yamauchi and Timofeyeva 2:20:11. Radcliffe, who had to stop, in tears, and stretch a cramped calf against a roadside barrier after 2hr 14 min of running, was by now completely out of it but determined to finish.

Over the last 2.195K Tomescu was timed at 7:37 while Ndereba, who outsprinted Zhou for her

Continued on next page

second Olympic Silver, clocked 6:58 but posed no threat to Tomescu, who was running her third marathon this year. Ninth (2:28:15) in Osaka in January and 8th (2:27:45) in London in April had hardly augured well for her Olympic prospects but in fact she peaked at just the right time to clock 2:26:44 and Olympic glory. Yamauchi, winner of that Osaka race, finished 6th to equal the highest-ever British placing in this event, by Priscilla Welch in 1984. There were best-ever times for places 28–56. 36 women under 2:35 and 55 under 2:40 beat previous records of 33 and 47 at 2003 Worlds in Paris.

Commenting on the race, Tomescu said: "I kept pushing and pushing and in the last few kilometers I was looking back because I wanted to be sure. I didn't know how far they were behind me. I have been caught so often that it was only in the last 200m of the race that I was certain I had the gold. I talked with my coach [husband Valeriu Tomescu] before the race and he said if the pace is slow to push harder in the second half. If someone had come with me I would have shared the pace with them, but no one came." The Tomescus, who have a 13-year-old son, live and train in high altitude Boulder, CO for most of the year.

Marathon, (17th)

1. Constantina Tomescu ROU, 2:26:44; 2. Catherine Ndereba KEN, 2:27:06; 3. Zhou Chunxun CHN, 2:27:07; 4. Zhu Xiaolin CHN, 2:27:16; 5. Martha Komu KEN, 2:27:23; 6. Mara Yamauchi GBR, 2:27:29; 7. Irina Timofeyeva RUS, 2:27:31; 8. Lidia Simon ROU, 2:27:51; 9. Souad Ait Salem ALG, 2:28:29; 10. Salina Kosgei KEN, 2:29:28

3000m Steeplechase

How fitting that the inaugural Olympic women's steeplechase should prove the occasion for a barrier-breaking landmark. Ever since Galkina (then Samitova) set a world record of 9:01.59 in 2004 it has only been a matter of time before someone would duck under 9 minutes, and it was Galkina herself who achieved that in Beijing with a time of 8:58.81. The 30-year-old Russian, who is married to 44.83 400m runner Anton Galkin, led throughout and ran kilometers of 2:58.63, 3:02.57 (6:01.20 at 2000m) and 2:57.61 in what was virtually a time trial!

For the first half of the race she was closely tailed by Jepkorir and Petrova but by 2000m she had opened up a 20m gap over the other two and the race for first was over. However, a lively battle for the other medals ensued as Dominguez and world champion Volkova joined in the fray on the last lap. However, Dominguez (who has run 9:21.76 in her first season at the event at age 32) fell over a barrier while a close fourth and Jepkosgei overtook Volkova in the last few meters to snatch Silver in the Commonwealth and African record time of 9:07.41 for third on the world all-time list behind Galkina and Volkova (9:06.57 when winning the world title). Petrova faded to 4th and behind her there was a second Romanian record in two days for Casandra (who set world bests during the event's early days in 2000), a pb for Bisibori and an Ethiopian record by Ahmed. Further back, Barringer set a North American record. It was by some margin the greatest in-depth race with ten women inside 9:26 and the best ever times for places 1-13 (previous record six under 9:30).

Each of the three heats was won in a fast time by a Russian who led all the way. The previous best time in a women's steeplechase heat of 9:27.95 by Dorcus Inzikuru was bettered by five women in both heats 1 and 3 with Galkina running 9:15.17, a time

that only five women had ever exceeded. Helen Clitheroe, in her second season of steeplechasing, just missed qualifying for the final with her UK record of 9:29.14.

It's not that surprising that Galkina was able to post such a spectacular time as she is also a world class runner on the flat. She has pbs of 2:01.40 for 800m, 4:01.29 for 1500m, 4:20.23 for the mile, 8:41.72 for 3000m and 14:33.13 for 5000m.

3000 Meters Steeplechase, (h 15th, F 17th)

1. Gulnara Galkina RUS, 1h1 9:15.17, 8:58.81* WR; 2. Eunice Jepkorir KEN, 1h3 9:21.31, 9:07.41 Afr & Comm rec; 3. Yekaterina Volkova RUS, 3h3 9:23.06, 9:07.64; 4. Tatyana Petrova RUS, 1h2 9:28.85, 9:12.33; 5. Cristina Casandra ROU, 4h1 9:22.38, 9:16.85; 6. Ruth Bisibori KEN, 2h1 9:19.75, 9:17.35; 7. Zenzem Ahmed ETH, 4h3 9:25.63, 9:17.85; 8. Wioletta Franciewicz POL, 3h1 9:21.88, 9:21.76; 9. Jennifer Barringer USA, 3h2 9:29.20, 9:22.26 N.Am rec; 10. Anna Willard USA, 6h3 9:28.52, 9:25.63

100m Hurdles

It wasn't only the men's sprint hurdles which proved to be jinxed. Making her racing comeback after recovering from a hamstring injury, Susanna Kallur fell as her lead leg crashed into the first hurdle in her semi ("I guess I tried too much; I wanted to run too fast. For the first time this summer I felt in really good shape"). Tejeda was another non-finisher but the most traumatic setback occurred in the final. Jones had travelled to Beijing as clear favorite with a world-leading time of 12.45 plus a windy 12.29, and despite a sluggish start had reduced her pb to 12.43 when winning her semi to rank equal 11th on the world all-time list. On paper she was nearly two meters ahead of the opposition, Cherry being the next fastest semi-finalist at 12.62 followed by the third string American Harper. And that was roughly the extent of Jones' lead in the final as she rose to clear the penultimate hurdle ahead of Harper and fast starting McLellan, heading for a certain victory and possibly a time of inside 12.40. Fate decreed otherwise. Reminiscent of Gail Devers' calamity at the 1992 Games when she clipped the final hurdle with the heel of her lead leg when well in the lead, to finish 5th, Jones struck the top of that ninth barrier with her lead leg, causing her to stumble. She somehow managed to stay on her feet but the chance of glory had disappeared and she finished a distraught 7th.

That left the unheralded Harper (24) to win with a full metre to spare. Luck was with her, as it had been at the U.S. Trials where she had edged Nicole Denby for the vital third place by 7/1000ths of a second. Only ranked eighth on the list of entrants with 12.58 she nobtrusively ran the race of her life to take the title in a pb of 12.54. Her delight was shared by McLellan, who led over the first three hurdles, and Lopes-Schliep, neither of whom had expected to finish among the medals. It was close, though, as just 0.02 separated 2nd from 6th. Harper, who trains with the previous Olympic champion Joanna Hayes and world champion Michelle Perry under the guidance of Bobby Kersee, commented: "On the day it's anyone's race and I gave myself a chance. Being the Olympic champion has always been a dream of mine. It's so surreal, it's so amazing."

"You hit a hurdle about twice a year where it affects your race," reflected Jones. "It's just a shame that it happened on the biggest race of my life. About the middle part of the race, the hurdles were just coming up very fast, and I just told myself what I always tell myself, 'keep things tight'. But it's kind of like a car. When you race in a car and you're going

max velocity and you hit a curve, you either maintain control or you crash and burn and today I crashed and burned. I am shocked and sad. I did such an amazing job this year but in the hurdles you have to get over all ten. It's very hard right now, it'll be harder tomorrow."

100 Meters Hurdles, (h 17th, sf 18th, F 19th)

1. Dawn Harper USA, 2h5 12.73, 2s2 12.66, 12.54; 2. Sally McLellan AUS, 2h3 12.83, 4s1 12.72, 12.64; 3. Priscilla Lopes-Schliep CAN, 2h2 12.75, 3s1 12.68, 12.64; 4. Damu Cherry USA, 3h2 12.92, 1s2 12.62, 12.65; 5. Delloreen Ennis-London JAM, 1h3 12.82, 2s1 12.67, 12.65; 6. Brigitte Foster-Hylton JAM, 1h5 12.69, 3s2 12.76, 12.66; 7. Lolo Jones USA, 1h4 12.71, 1s1 12.43, 12.72; 8. Sarah Claxton GBR, 3h3 12.97, 4s2 12.84, 12.94; Vionette Dixon JAM, 1h2 12.69, 5s2 12.86; Josephine Onyia ESP, 1h1 12.68, 5s1 12.86

400m Hurdles

Fani Halkia, who had been selected by Greece despite poor form this year, could not defend the title she won in Athens as she was withdrawn following a positive drug test at the Greek training camp in Japan. She also lost her Olympic record of 52.77 as Walker (25) maintained Jamaica's tremendous showing at these Games when winning by over a second in 52.64. It was a massive improvement by the 12.75 sprint hurdler. Third in the 2000 and second in the 2002 World Juniors, she was only a semi-finalist in last year's World Champs and had a best of 54.14 before this season. Unbeaten this year, she took a big step forward when running 53.48 in Monaco and now she is the fourth fastest of all-time behind Yuliya Pechonkina (52.34), Kim Batten (52.61) and Tonja Buford-Bailey (52.62). Her time broke Sally Gunnell's Commonwealth record and Deon Hemmings' CAC and Jamaican record of 52.82 set when winning the Olympic crown in 1996.

Leading into the straight was Tosta (the former Sheena Johnson, 4th in Athens), who after running a very poor heat, won the faster semi in 54.07. Walker drew level by the eighth hurdle, was slightly ahead at the ninth and then built up a commanding lead. As Tosta faded, so Danvers closed on her. An isolated third at the final hurdle, the Briton (8th in 2000) eventually finished little more than a metre down on the American, clocking a timely pb of 53.84. That she was given this opportunity to run the race of her life was due to the insight of the British team selectors who picked her (knowing about her struggle to get racing fit again after Achilles tendon and hamstring injuries) even though she was well beaten in the Olympic Trials. Her fastest this season had been just 55.91 but in the rounds she progressed to 55.19 and 54.31. An equally fast finisher was Rabchenyuk, who reduced her pb from the semi (54.60) to 53.96. American champion Williams, #2 on the world list this year with 53.54, had a disastrous run to finish last in 57.55. "This was the worst race of my life," she admitted. "I jumped the hurdle with the wrong leg five times. I don't know what happened."

400 Meters Hurdles, (h 17th, sf 18th, F 20th)

1. Melaine Walker JAM, 1h3 54.46, 1s2 54.20, 52.64* CAC rec; 2. Sheena Tosta USA, 5h2 56.12, 1s1 54.07, 53.70; 3. Tasha Danvers GBR, 1h2 55.19, 2s1 54.31, 53.84; 4. Anastasiya Rabchenyuk UKR, 2h3 55.18, 2s2 54.60, 53.96; 5. Anna Jesien POL, 2h4 55.35, 3s1 54.36, 54.29; 6. Yekaterina Bikert RUS, 1h4 55.15, 4s1 54.38, 54.96; 7. Zuzana Hejnová CZE, 3h4 55.91, 4s2 55.17, 54.97; 8. Tiffany Williams USA, 1h1 55.51, 3s2 54.99, 57.55; Nikiesha Wilson JAM, 3h2 55.75, 5s1 54.67; Anastasiya Ott RUS, 2h2 55.34, 6s1 54.74

High Jump

For the 32nd consecutive competition Vlasic cleared 2.00 or higher, an excellent 2.05 in fact, but her win

streak came to an end at 34 as Hellebaut seized the Gold medal which most students of the event had practically awarded the Croatian in advance. What a contrast to the 2007 World Champs when Vlasic won 2.05 while Hellebaut was 14th at 1.90. This time Hellebaut (30), only 4th with 1.92 in London, her final pre-Beijing contest, not only added 2cm to her national outdoor record (to win the 2006 European title, although she jumped 2.05 indoors last year) but became the first Belgian woman ever to win an Olympic title. "I surprised myself today," she said. Vlasic, who said "I knew Tia would be a tough opponent," added: "I am so tired. There were lots of expectations, lots of pressure. I've had so much media hype, it was not easy to perform tonight. But I'm happy. I think I did a good job. Of course I wanted the Gold medal but today was a good fight and I'm proud I was part of it." It certainly was a great contest and never before has anyone jumped as high as 2.05 and lost and there were also records for 3rd and 6th places.

Six women were left in when the bar was raised to 2.01 with Vlasic in the lead with no failures. Hellebaut was 2nd on countback with Palamar 3rd, defending champion Slesarenko (who had only just qualified for the final with a shaky third attempt at 1.93 and who said later that she was jumping with an injured leg) 4th, Chicherova 5th and Howard 6th. Friedrich and Beitia, both over 2m this year, had failed at 1.99. Clearing 2.01 first time, Vlasic consolidated her lead and Chicherova moved up to 2nd. Successful at the second try were Hellebaut (with plenty to spare) and Slesarenko. Palamar failed twice and unavailingly carried over her final attempt to 2.03. The medallists were decided at 2.03, for Slesarenko departed, Vlasic maintained her clean sheet, Chicherova matched her outdoor pb also with a first time clearance to strengthen her hold on Silver and Hellebaut made it on the second try. Vlasic, jumping first, failed her initial attempt at 2.05; so did Chicherova but Hellebaut went over! Vlasic cleared at the second attempt (Chicherova had three failures) but was unable to clear 2.07 and world indoor pentathlon champion Hellebaut was the Goldmedallist, having taken the shrewd decision to aim for this event rather than the heptathlon and showing once again that she is one of the greatest ever athletes at raising one's game for the big event.

High Jump, (Q 1.96 21st, F 23rd)

1. Tia Hellebaut BEL, 1.93q, 2.05, 1.85/1, 1.89/1, 1.93/1, 1.96/1, 1.99/2, 2.01/2, 2.03/2, 2.05/1, 2.07/x; 2. Blanka Vlasic CRO, 1.93, 2.05, 1.85/1, 1.89/1, 1.93/1, 1.96/1, 1.99/1, 2.01/1, 2.03/1, 2.05/2, 2.07/xxx; 3. Anna Chicherova RUS, 1.93, 2.03, 1.85/1, 1.89/1, 1.93/1, 1.96/2, 1.99/3, 2.01/1, 2.03/1, 2.05/xxx; 4. Yelena Slesarenko RUS, 1.93, 2.01, 1.85/1, 1.89/1, 1.93/2, 1.96/2, 1.99/2, 2.01/2, 2.03/xxx; 5. Vita Palamar UKR, 1.93, 1.99, 1.85/1, 1.89/1, 1.93/1, 1.96/2, 1.99/2, 2.01/xx, 2.03/x; 6. Chaunté Howard USA, 1.93, 1.99, 1.85/1, 1.89/1, 1.93/2, 1.96/2, 1.99/3, 2.01/xxx; 7. Ruth Beitia ESP, 1.93, 1.96; 7. Ariane Friedrich GER, 1.93, 1.96, 9. Emma Green SWE, 1.93, 1.96; 10. Marina Aitova KAZ, 1.93, 1.93; 10. Antonietta Di Martino ITA, 1.93, 1.93

Pole Vault

Isinbayeva continues to close in on her target of surpassing Sergey Bubka's total of 35 world records. Here she notched up number 24 (14th outdoors) and in one respect at least has gone ahead of Bubka. He was crowned Olympic champion only once but the 26 year-old Russian now has two golds, setting world records both times (4.91 in Athens). Only one other athlete has won back to back Olympic titles with world records, and that was Abebe Bikila in the marathon, 1960 and 1964.

Four years ago, Isinbayeva qualified with 4.40 and here 4.50 was needed, although she sailed over 4.60 as, after clearing 4.40, she passed 4.50. She entered the final long after everyone else with the bar at 4.70 and sailed over by a huge margin following other first time clearances by Stuczynski and Golubchikova; Pyrek made it on her second try. Former world record holder and 2004 Silver medallist Feofanova passed 4.70 but took the lead by clearing 4.75 first time, a performance which earned her the Bronze medal. Stuczynski and Golubchikova (equalling her pb) made it at the second try but Pyrek was eliminated. The super-confident Isinbayeva elected to pass 4.80 too and Stuczynski seized the initiative with her first time clearance while Feofanova (very close) and Golubchikova fell by the wayside. At 4.85 Stuczynski chose to pass but Isinbayeva made it to wrest back the lead. The American went quite close at her first attempt at 4.90 but failed four times in all. Four times? She was granted an extra attempt because the officials had given her only two minutes, instead of three, on her second unsuccessful try. Then Isinbayeva, as so often, had the stage to herself. At the third attempt she raised her Olympic record to 4.95 ... and, to her great excitement (no one can ever get blasé about setting world records no matter how often it happens), she succeeded in clearing 5.05 again at the final attempt. Unfair to compare, thanks to fibre glass poles, but that would have won every men's Olympic title up to and including 1960 and good for Silver in 1964.

As purportedly a senior lieutenant in the Russian Army (what are her soldiering duties as a resident of Monaco?), Isinbayeva cares about rank and part of her motivation for winning in Beijing was Stuczynski's ill advised claim that she would beat her. As she told a press conference after the event: "It made me angry. It made me want to prove who is better. It wasn't nice, she must show respect and know her position. Now she knows her position."

Pole Vault, (Q 4.60 16th, F 18th)

1. Yelena Isinbayeva RUS, 4.60q, 5.05* WR, (4.70/1, 4.85/1, 4.95/3, 5.05/3); 2. Jenn Stuczynski USA, 4.50, 4.80, (4.55/1, 4.70/1, 4.75/2, 4.80/1, 4.90/xxx); 3. Svetlana Feofanova RUS, 4.50, 4.75, (4.45/1, 4.55/1, 4.65/2, 4.75/1, 4.80/xxx); 4. Yuliya Golubchikova RUS, 4.50, 4.75, (4.45/1, 4.55/1, 4.65/2, 4.70/1, 4.75/2, 4.80/xxx); 5. Monika Pyrek POL, 4.50, 4.70, (4.45/1, 4.55/1, 4.65/1, 4.70/2, 4.75/xxx); 6. Carolin Hingst GER, 4.50, 4.65, (4.30/1, 4.45/1, 4.55/1, 4.65/3, 4.70/xxx); 7. Silke Spiegelburg GER, 4.50, 4.65, (4.30/1, 4.45/2, 4.55/1, 4.65/3, 4.70/xxx); 8. April Steiner USA, 4.50, 4.55, 9. Vanessa Bostlak FRA, 4.50, 4.55; 10. Fabiana Murer BRA, 4.50, 4.45; 10. Anna Rogowska POL, 4.50, 4.45

Long Jump

For the second time in 12 years an athlete previously banned for a doping offence has won the Olympic women's long jump. Nigeria's Chioma Ajunwa returned from a four year suspension to win with 7.12 in Atlanta (in 2002 she was banned for life after being caught for a second time and this writer feels Fiona May, second with 7.02, should be regarded as the true champion), and in Beijing the Gold medal went to 32 year-old Maggi, who was suspended in 2003 for two years. Maggi, the first Brazilian woman to win an Olympic medal in any event, clinched victory with her opening jump of 7.04, just 2cm short of her best low altitude mark although she was credited with 7.26 at high altitude nine years ago. That surpassed the 6.97 by defending champion Lebedeva, who then proceeded to foul her next four attempts before delivering a so-close 7.03 (7.08 from take-off) in the final

round. Maggi, who failed to qualify for the final with 6.35 in Sydney 2000 and was serving her ban at the time of the Athens Games, had only one other measured jump of 6.73 in the fifth round. The totally unexpected Bronze medallist was 19 year-old Okagbare who jumped only 6.59 in the qualifying round and was only added to the final when heptathlon Silver medallist Blonska was removed following a positive drugs test. The Nigerian, whose pb had risen steeply from 6.16 in 2006 to 6.51 last year and 6.86 this summer, opened with 6.91. The most notable absentee from the final was the favorite Naide Gomes, this year's world leader with 7.12. In the qualifying competition she had two fouls in the 7m+ region and, going for a safety jump, lost her nerve on the run-up, hesitated before the board and went only 6.29. Another major casualty was Tatyana Kotova, so often a medallist in global championships. Klüft qualified with 6.70 but after managing only 6.49 in the final hinted of a possible return to heptathlon.

Long Jump, (Q 6.75 19th, F 22nd)

1. Maurren Maggi BRA, 6.79/0.3q, 7.04/0.2, (7.04, x, x, x, 6.73/0.3, x); 2. Tatyana Lebedeva RUS, 6.70/1.4, 7.03/0.4, (6.97/0.5, x, x, x, 7.03); 3. Blessing Okagbare NGR, 6.59/0.4, 6.91/0.1, (6.91, 6.62, 6.79/0.7, 6.70/0.3, 6.83/0.1); 4. Chelsea Hammond JAM, 6.60/0.4, 6.79/0.2, (6.79, 6.68, 6.51, x, 6.64, 6.59); 5. Brittney Reese USA, 6.87/1.1, 6.76/0.4, (6.65, 6.76, 6.23, x, 6.46, 6.67); 6. Oksana Udumrudeva RUS, 6.63/0.5, 6.70/0.6, (6.69, 6.70, 6.67, 6.61, 6.65, 6.49); 7. Jade Johnson GBR, 6.61/0.7, 6.64/0.7; 8. Grace Upshaw USA, 6.68/0.6, 6.58/0.4; 9. Carolina Klüft SWE, 6.70/1.0, 6.49/0.2; 10. Tabia Charles CAN, 6.61/0.6, 6.47/0.5

Triple Jump

After collecting Silver medals in two World Champs (behind Lebedeva), in two Commonwealth Games and a World Indoors (behind the now retired Ashia Hansen), Mbango finally struck Gold in Athens four years ago, twice jumping 15.30 to defeat Devetzi and Lebedeva after a notable competition. Little was heard of her subsequently; she jumped 14.07 in 2005 before she took two years off athletics, giving birth to a son. She only resurfaced in May this year when, now aged 32, she claimed the African title with an altitude-aided 14.76. In July she jumped 14.95 to rank third on the 2008 world list behind Devetzi (15.22) and Savigne (15.20), with Lebedeva next on 14.92.

A great contest was anticipated in Beijing, and it fulfilled expectations as the best ever marks were set for places 2-6 and 9 (previous bests all at OG 2004 when four women went over 15m). Sestak set the ball rolling in the first round with a Slovenian record of 15.03, followed by 15.00 from Lebedeva and a startling 15.19 by Mbango. Devetzi seized the lead with her second effort of 15.23 while in quick succession Lebedeva, wearing sleeves—one red and one white, improved to 15.17 and Mbango hit a sensational 15.39, the second longest mark of all time, breaking Inessa Kravets' 1996 Olympic record of 15.33 and her own African and Commonwealth records. Devetzi went all out to retrieve the lead but fouled all four of her remaining jumps, while Lebedeva came close with her third round 15.32, a distance only she, Mbango and world record holder Kravets have ever surpassed. A surprisingly subdued Savigne, who had led the qualifiers with 14.99, woke up with 15.05 in round 4 with Rypakova jumping 15.03. With her fifth effort Rypakova added another 8 cm and astonishingly, the athlete from Kazakhstan (pre-Beijing best of 14.69) set four consecutive national records, the last three also Asian records: 14.83, 14.93, 15.03 and 15.11!

Continued on next page

Triple Jump, (Q 14.45 15th, F 17th)

1. Françoise Mbango CMR, 14.50/0.0q, 15.39/0.5*, (15.19/1.3, 15.39 Afr rec, x, 14.82/0.1, x, 14.88/0.1); 2. Tatyana Lebedeva RUS, 14.55/0.0, 15.32/0.5, (15.00/1.2, 15.17/1.0, 15.32, 14.40, x, x); 3. Hrysopiya Devetzi GRE, 14.92/0.1, 15.23/1.6, (14.96/0.8, 15.23, x, x, x, x); 4. Olga Rypakova KAZ, 14.64/0.0, 15.11/0.3, (x, 14.83/0.6, 14.93/0.5, 15.03/0.6, 15.11, x) 3 Asian recs; 5. Yargelis Savigne CUB, 14.99/-0.3, 15.05/0.1, (x, 14.87/0.5, 14.77/0.1, 15.05, x, 14.91/0.8); 6. Marija Sestak SLO, 14.44/-0.5, 15.03/1.1, (15.03, 14.65/0.6, x, 14.46, 14.47, 14.75/0.9); 7. Viktoriya Gurova RUS, 14.78/0.3, 14.77/1.1; 8. Anna Pyatykh RUS, 14.45/0.0, 14.73/-0.2; 9. Olga Saladuha UKR, 14.46/-0.3, 14.70/1.2; 10. Kaire Leibak EST, 14.19/0.0, 14.13/0.8

Shot Put

World youth champion in 2001, world junior champion in 2002, Bronze medalist at the 2005 World Champs, Commonwealth champion in 2006, world champion in 2007 ... and now the ultimate, Olympic champion in 2008. Vili (23, née Adams) became New Zealand's first female Olympic Goldmedallist since long jumper Yvette Williams in 1952, and in some style. She opened with what proved to be the winning distance of 20.56, adding 2 cm to the Commonwealth and Oceania records she set in Osaka last year, and followed with four other throws in excess of 20m before passing up her final attempt when victory was assured.

Based on 2008 marks, the 1.93m, 123kg Vili (20.19) came into the competition well behind the Belarus pair of Ostapchuk (20.98) and Mikhnevich (20.70), but as in last year's World Champs (20.54-20.48) and this year's World Indoors (20.19-19.74) she got the better of Ostapchuk. On this occasion it was Mikhnevich (née Khoroneko, she is married to Bronze medalist Andrey) who posed the most serious challenge with 20.28 in the second round. Ostapchuk was visibly disgusted by her lack of form as she only just survived the cut and was still languishing in 8th place with 18.69 until a fifth round 19.86 propelled her into Bronze medal position, ousting González whose 19.50 was a pb. 15 athletes met the modest standard of 18.45, but the 2000 and 2004 champions Yuliya Pravalinskaya and Yumileidi Cumbá failed to qualify. Chinese hopes were raised when Gong Lijiao, a junior, reached the second longest distance of 19.46, a pb, in the qualifying round but in the final she had to settle for 5th with 19.20. Michelle Carter, last in the final, is the daughter of 1984 Olympic shot Silver medalist Michael Carter.

Shot, (Q 18.45 & F 16th)

1. Valerie Vili NZL, 19.73q, 20.56 Oce rec, (20.56, 20.40, 20.26, 20.01, 20.52, pb); 2. Natalya Mikhnevich BLR, 19.11, 20.28, (19.16, 20.28, 19.87, 19.82, 19.94, 20.10); 3. Nadezhda Ostapchuk BLR, 19.08, 19.86, (x, 18.69, 18.36, x, 19.86, 19.36); 4. Misleydis González CUB, 18.91, 19.50, (19.30, x, 19.01, 19.23, 19.50, x); 5. Gong Lijiao CHN, 19.46, 19.20, (18.45, 18.75, 18.90, 18.92, 19.04, 19.20); 6. Anna Omarova RUS, 18.74, 19.08; 7. Nadine Kleinert GER, 18.52, 19.01; 8. Li Meiju CHN, 19.18, 19.00; 9. Olga Ivanova RUS, 18.46, 18.44; 10. Mailin Vargas CUB, 18.47, 18.28

Discus

After two rounds of qualifying Stephanie Brown-Trafton, ranked second on distance this year among the entrants with 66.17, was in trouble. Her first throw went only 57.78 and then she had fouled. However, her final attempt sailed out to 62.77 to head the qualifiers. Defending champion Natalya Sadova (66.08 this season) went out in 25th place with 58.11. In the final the 28 year-old 1.93m (6ft 4in) American had only one good throw but it was all she needed: a first round effort of 64.74. Her closest challenger was Osaka Bronze medalist Barrios who opened with 63.17 and reached 63.64 in the second round. At halfway Song was in third place with 62.17 but lost her grip on Bronze when Antono-

va threw 62.59 in the third round. The last time the 36 year-old Ukrainian won a major medal was when she was 3rd in the European Junior Champs of 1991! She wasn't the oldest finalist, though. Yatchenko, the 2003 world champion and twice an Olympic Bronze medalist, is 42, while 6th placed Zvereva, Olympic champion in 2000 who threw 71.58 20 years ago, is 47! The average age of the finalists was 33. The usually consistent 36 year-old Grasu (at her fifth Games) came in last with just one valid throw. Missing from the competition were ailing world champion Franka Dietzsch and Darya Pishchalnikova, who tops the world list with 67.28 but is currently suspended.

Trafton, who has never won a national title, became the first American woman to win this title since Lillian Copeland threw 40.58 for victory in Los Angeles in 1932. "I came to the Bird's Nest to lay a golden egg, and that's what I did," said the Californian, whose mother is from the Isle of Wight in England. Her only previous experience on the international stage was at the 2004 Olympics where she threw 58.54, failing to qualify for the final in 22nd place. The winning throw was the shortest Gold medal mark since 1968.

Discus, (Q 61.50 15th, F 18th)

1. Stephanie Brown Trafton USA, 62.77q, 64.74, (64.74, x, x, 58.39, 61.30, x); 2. Yareliis Barrios CUB, 62.23, 63.64, (63.17, 63.64, 62.22, 62.12, x, 60.30); 3. Olena Antonova UKR, 61.25, 62.59, (60.79, 62.16, x, 60.50, 62.59, 62.34); 4. Song Aimin CHN, 61.67, 62.20; 5. Vera Cechlova CZE, 61.61, 61.75; 6. Ellina Zvereva BLR, 60.28, 60.82; 7. Li Yanfeng CHN, 61.29, 60.68; 8. Mělina Robert-Michon FRA, 62.21, 60.66; 9. Dani Samuels AUS, 61.72, 60.15; 10. Aretha Thurmond USA, 61.90, 59.80

Hammer

There was carnage in the qualifying competition where four women who have topped 74m this year—Brkljacic, Konevtsova, Sekachova and Smolyachkova—could muster only between 67 and 69m, although the last's 69.22 was the best ever non-qualifying mark and there were best ever marks for any competition for places for 8th to the 31 over 65m. Even Menkova, third longest thrower of all time and world leader this year at 77.32, thailed to reach 70m but got through as 11th of the 12 who advanced. Moreno led the way with 73.92, followed by Zhang Wenxiu at 73.36.

In the final a far more assured Menkova opened with 74.40 with Zhang second after the first round with a season's best of 74.00. Moreno, who had thrown into the cage at the first attempt, moved into 3rd in the second round with 73.95 while Zhang improved to 74.32. That was the position at halfway, the four to be eliminated including Skolimowska, the 2000 champion when she was 17 (3 fouls), and world champion Heidler who after two fouls threw an insufficient 70.06. The big action came in the fifth round. The ever consistent Moreno, world champion in 2001 and 2003, Silver medalist in 2005 and 2007, and Olympic runner-up in Athens, reached 74.70 ... and for a minute or two savoured the prospect of becoming Olympic champion. But it was not to be, for Menkova (26) responded with an Olympic record of 76.34. Moreno's final effort was an improvement but at 75.20 she had to settle for yet another Silver medal. Until now Menkova had been a very poor championship competitor, having failed to reach the final at two European (27th and 23rd) and two World (23rd and nt) Champs. This summer, however, she displayed splendid form in the European Cup with a 75.97 victory.

Hammer, (Q 71.50 18th, F 20th)

1. Oksana Menkova BLR, 69.77q, 76.34*, (74.40, x, 72.23, x, 76.34, 51.72); 2. Yipsi Moreno CUB, 73.92, 75.20, (x, 73.95, 72.61, x, 74.70,

75.20); 3. Zhang Wenxiu CHN, 73.36, 74.32, (74.00, 74.32, 73.40, 73.50, 70.75, 73.53); 4. Darya Pchelinsk BLR, 71.30, 73.65, (69.10, 72.46, 72.82, 71.00, 72.83, 73.65); 5. Manuela Montebrun FRA, 72.81, 72.54, (67.63, 70.55, 70.01, 72.54, 71.92, 70.63); 6. Anita Włodarczyk POL, 71.76, 71.56; 7. Clarissa Claretta ITA, 71.82, 71.33; 8. Martina Hrasnova SVK, 72.87, 71.00; 9. Betty Heidler GER, 71.51, 70.06; 10. Yelena Priyma RUS, 70.69, 69.72

Javelin

What a fabulous competition this was, reminiscent of that 1983 World Champs classic when Tiina Liljak defeated Fatima Whitbread with her very last throw. Until a couple of weeks before the Games, it had been widely assumed that Gold and Silver would be fought out between European record holder (70.20) Obergföll, with 67.72 to her name this season, and world champion Spotáková, world leader at 69.15. But joining them in contention at the last moment was 22 year-old Abakumova (2005 European junior champion, 60.12 in 2006, 64.28 last year), who after some pretty mediocre performances—notably 10th in Jerez with 55.84 when Spotáková won with 64.99—threw 65.71 for the Russian title and 67.25 for a Russian record at Irkutsk on Aug 2. Spotáková (67.69) and Obergföll (67.52) got off big throws in the qualifying round, with Nerius and Abakumova also over 63m.

Obergföll was first of the trio to throw in a rain-soaked final and opened with a solid 66.13 ... to be followed immediately by Abakumova (still wearing her tracksuit bottoms) with a stunning national record of 69.32. A momentous round continued with Sayers breaking her own UK record with 65.75, acquitting herself well for the first time in a major championship, while the Czech began with a national record of 69.22. Defending champion Menéndez had no answer to this onslaught, opening with 63.35 and then fouling the rest of her attempts. The second round featured another mighty throw by the Russian (69.08) and with her fourth delivery Abakumova let fly with a European record of 70.78, a distance exceeded only by Menéndez with 71.70 in 2005, 71.54 in 2001 and 71.53 when winning the title in Athens in 2004. That surely must be the winning mark ... but no, with her final effort Spotáková brought off a famous victory with a massive throw of 71.42! Marks for 4th and 5th were the best ever for those places.

Spotáková (27), a fine all-round athlete who has high jumped 1.78 and even completed a decathlon, confessed: "I can tell you honestly, I don't know how I did it. I usually win with my first throw. I've never won with my last attempt. This is the first time." Watching her become the first Czech to win this event since Dana Zátopková in 1952 was three-time Olympic champion Jan Zelezny, the man who advised her five years ago to give up heptathlon (5873 in 2000) to concentrate on the javelin. There was added piquancy to Spotáková's win over Abakumova; the day of the final marked the 40th anniversary of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Javelin, (Q 61.50 19th, F 21st)

1. Barbora Spotáková CZE, 67.69q, 71.42 Eur rec, (69.22, 67.04, x, 64.92, x, 71.42); 2. Mariya Abakumova RUS, 63.48, 70.78, (69.32, 69.08, x, 70.78, x, 67.52); 3. Christina Obergföll GER, 67.52, 66.13, (66.13, x, 63.34, x, x, x); 4. Goldie Sayers GBR, 62.99, 65.75, (65.75, 59.40, 62.92, 59.72, 65.03, 56.83); 5. Steffi Nerius GER, 63.94, 65.29, (64.05, 62.25, 59.97, x, x, 65.29); 6. Osleidys Menéndez CUB, 60.51, 63.35, (63.35, x, x, x, x, x); 7. Barbara Madejczyk POL, 62.81, 62.02; 8. Katharina Molitor GER, 60.92, 59.64; 9. Mercedes Chilla ESP, 61.81, 58.13; 10. Zhang Li CHN-J, 61.77, 56.14

Heptathlon

With no Klüff, Barber, Ennis or Hellebaut to worry about, the three highest scorers of the year—Fountain

(6667), Chernova (6618) and Blonska (6570)—along with Sotherton (6510 last year), may have felt that they would be fighting it out for the Olympic crown. Who would seriously have considered Dobrynska, 9th in Götzis with 6268 and whose all-time highest score was 6387 from 2004? Yet it was the 26-year-old Ukrainian who succeeded Klüft with a score of 6733 including no fewer than five personal bests.

U.S. champion Fountain set the pace, with pbs of 12.78 in the hurdles (from 12.99 although with a windy 12.65) and high jump 1.89. After those two events she led with 2251 from Bogdanova 2165 and Blonska 2132. Sotherton (pb 13.18 hurdles but modest 1.83 HJ) was 5th with 2113 and Chernova 9th with 2044. Few noticed Dobrynska (pb 13.44 and 1.80), 10th with 2037 ... but they certainly did in the next event, the shot, where she smashed Skujyte's "world heptathlon record" of 17.03 with a spectacular lifetime best of 17.29. That propelled her into first place (3052) as Fountain (3002) managed only 13.36, a turnaround of 264pts. Fountain bounced back with an excellent 200m pb of 23.21 (for an overnight score of 4060) with a now inspired Dobrynska improving from 24.84 to 24.39 (3996) and Sotherton running a pb 23.39 after a most disappointing shot for 3rd at 3938. Blonska was 5th (3912) and Chernova 10th (3749).

The long jump was expected to produce lots of points for Fountain (pb of 6.88), Blonska (6.88), Sotherton (6.79) and Chernova (6.78) but they all performed well below par and the seeds of Dobrynska's eventual victory were sown when she, previously a 6.56 performer, led with 6.63. Both Blonska and Fountain had to settle for safety jumps after fouling twice and registered only 6.48 and 6.38 respectively, Chernova managed 6.47 and Sotherton a disastrous 6.33 which ended her medal chances. Scores after 5 events: Dobrynska 5045, Fountain 5029, Blonska 4913, Bogdanova 4913, Sotherton 4891, with Chernova 9th (4746).

Chernova, with a best of 54.49, had banked on closing in on the leaders through her javelin prowess, but threw only 48.37 while Dobrynska set two pbs (48.19 and 48.60) and Blonska reached 47.60—although she did well against Sotherton (37.66) and Fountain (41.93). Thus Dobrynska was in a seemingly impregnable position prior to the 800m: 5878 to 5733 Fountain, 5727 Blonska, 5575 Chernova and 5513 Sotherton. Chernova, with a best of 2:10.10, went for broke in the 800m, passing 400m in 59.98 and 600m in 1:32.87 for a superb 2:06.50. There were pbs also for Sotherton, Blonska and Fountain (2:15.45) while Dobrynska produced a season's best. Dobrynska's final margin over her compatriot Blonska was just 33pts, while Fountain held off Chernova's late charge by 28pts. Sotherton's 6517 was the second highest total of her career. The depth was the best ever as eight women scored over 6400 and 22 surpassed 6000 with the best ever marks for places 5 to 22.

A few days later came the news that Blonska had failed a drugs test for steroids. She was stripped of her medal and will presumably now be banned for life as a second time offender. She blamed her husband and coach.

Heptathlon, (15th/16th)

1. Natalya Dobrynska UKR, 13.44/1b, 1.80, 17.29, 24.39/1d, 6.63/0.3, 48.60, 2:17.72, 6733; 2. Hyleas Fountain USA, 12.78/1e, 1.89, 13.36, 23.21/1b, 6.38/0.3, 41.93, 2:15.45, 6619; 3. Tatyana Chernova RUS, 13.65/6d, 1.83, 12.88, 23.95/5b, 6.47/0.4, 48.37, 2:06.50, 6591; 4. Kelly Sotherton GBR, 13.18/4e, 1.83, 13.87, 23.39/2b, 6.33/0.1, 37.66, 2:07.34, 6517; 5. Jessica Zelinka CAN, 12.97/2e, 1.77, 13.79, 23.64/4b,

6.12/0.3, 43.91, 2:07.95, 6490; 6. Anna Bogdanova RUS, 13.09/3e, 1.86, 14.08, 24.24/3a, 6.45/0.6, 35.41, 2:09.45, 6465; 7. Karolina Tymniska POL, 13.62/3a, 1.77, 14.08, 23.39/3b, 6.53/0.6, 35.97, 2:07.08, 6428; 8. Lilli Schwarzkopf GER, 13.73/7d, 1.80, 14.61, 25.25/4d, 5.96/1.0, 51.88, 2:10.91, 6379; 9. Jolanda Keizer NED, 13.90/2b, 1.83, 15.15, 23.97/1a, 6.15/0.5, 42.76, 2:15.21, 6370; 10. Kylie Wheeler AUS, 13.68/5a, 1.89, 13.06, 24.28/4a, 6.11/0.7, 43.81, 2:11.49, 6369

4x100

Compounding the frustration of both the USA and Britain being disqualified in the men's 4x100m, the same thing happened to the women. When way out in the lead in their heat the Americans fluffed the last change, leaving Belgium to win in 42.92 ahead of Britain (43.02). With Jamaica, fielding two reserves, taking the second heat in 42.24 far in front of Russia's 42.87, it looked as though the Caribbean speedsters would not only retain their Olympic title but could challenge the GDR's world record of 41.37 dating back to 1985. The dream team assembled for the final was Fraser (pb of 10.78), Simpson (10.82), Stewart (10.80) and Campbell-Brown (10.85), but what ensued was a nightmare as at the second change-over Stewart went out too fast and the baton never got to her. Similarly, Britain threw away the possibility of a medal at the same change-over when Freeman set off too early. That gifted the race to Russia, anchored by Chermoshanskaya (daughter of Galina Malchugina who also in the 4x100m won Olympic Bronze in 1988 and Silver in 1992), in 42.31, the slowest winning time for 32 years, with Belgium—anchored by the soon-to-retire Gevaert—second in a national record of 42.54. The Bronze went to Nigeria, who had only placed 4th in their heat and advanced as a fastest loser. As with the men, half of the 16 teams were either disqualified or failed to finish.

4 x 100 Meters Relay, (Ht 21st, F 22nd)

1. RUS, 2h2 42.87, 42.31, Polyakova, Fedoriva, Gushchina, Chermoshanskaya; 2. BEL, 1h1 42.92, 42.54, Borlée, Marien, Ouedraogo, Gevaert; 3. NGR, 4h1 43.43, 43.04, Idoko, Kemasoude, Ismaila, Osayomi (ht: 3. Osazuwa); 4. BRA, 3h1 43.38, 43.14, Neto, de Moura, Presti, R Santos; 5. GER, 3h2 43.59, 43.28, Möllinger, Sailor, Tschirch, Wagner

4x400

It was redemption time for the American women sprinters. The 4x100m squad had failed to get the baton round and individually all they had to show was a Silver for Felix in the 200m and Bronze for Richards at 400m. They showed they meant business in their heat when, with Hastings standing in for Felix, and Richards able to amble through the last leg, they clocked 3:20.80. In the final they had to pull out all the stops.

Gushchina led on the first leg ahead of Jamaica's Shericka Williams and USA's Wineberg with Ohuruogu, surprisingly taking the lead-off rather than anchor, down in 5th in 51.27 whereas the expectation was that she would give Britain a head start. Effectively that was the end of realistic British hopes for a medal. On the second leg Felix was at her brilliant best, sweeping the USA into a 2m lead over Russia (Litvinova) with a 48.55 leg, fastest of the race. Lloyd ran a cracking race also to keep Jamaica in contention. Nigeria moved into 4th with Sotherton (deputising for the ill McConnell) surpassing herself with 50.35 (afre 50.57 in the heat) to maintain Britain's 5th place.

Russia (Firova) took the lead on leg 3, 5m clear of the USA (Henderson), with Whyte keeping Jamaica a clear 3rd. A 49.85 stint by Ilona Usovich brought Belarus up from 7th to 4th but Okoro, who ran better in the heats, could manage only 51.52 and Britain dropped to 7th. The last leg was a thriller. Kapachinskaya for Russia

was in the unenviable position of being aware that Richards, with much to prove, was after her. She stayed ahead until 30m from the end, when the American moved past, completing her leg in 48.93 and enabling the USA to win this event for the fourth time running. The time of 3:18.54 was the world's quickest for 15 years. Jamaica, anchored by Novlene Williams, finished an isolated 3rd ahead of Belarus and Britain, whose time of 3:22.68 was the third-fastest ever by a UK team but well outside the 3:20.04 which took Bronze in Osaka. Times for 6th to 8th were the best ever for those places.

4 x 400 Meters Relay, (h 22nd, F 23rd)

1. USA, 1h2 3:22.45, 3:18.54, Wineberg 51.0, Felix 48.6, Henderson 50.06, Richards 48.93, , ht: Wineberg 51.0, Henderson 49.8, Hastings 49.97, Richards 51.67; 2. RUS, 1h1 3:23.71, 3:18.82, Gushchina 50.6, Litvinova 49.2, Firova 49.20, Kapachinskaya 49.82, , ht: Migunova 51.80, Veskhurova 49.68, Litvinova 50.32, Firova 51.91; 3. JAM, 2h2 3:22.60, 3:20.40, S Williams 50.9, Lloyd 49.3, Whyte 50.34, N Williams 49.86, , ht: N Williams 50.5, Lloyd 50.1, Wilkins 50.94, S Williams 51.13; 4. BLR, 3h2 3:22.78, 3:21.85, Kozak 52.0, Khlyustova 50.3, I Usovich 49.85, S Usovich 49.69, , ht: Yushchenko 51.40, Khlyustova 50.37, I Usovich 49.93, S Usovich 51.08; 5. GBR, 3h1 3:25.48, 3:22.68, Ohuruogu 51.3, Sotherton 50.4, Okoro 51.52, Sanders 49.54, , ht: Sanders 50.9, Sotherton 50.6, Okoro 51.02, Ohuruogu 52.94; 6. CUB, 2h1 3:25.46, 3:23.21, Diaz 51.1, Calatayud 51.2, Clement 50.47, Terrero 50.46, , ht: Diaz 51.8, Calatayud 51.2, Clement 51.38, Terrero 51.11; 7. NGR, 4h2 3:24.10, 3:23.74, Eze 51.5, Abugan 50.0, Nwoke 51.53, Odumoso 50.72, , ht: Abugan 51.47, Eze 50.42, Nwoke 51.83, Odumoso 50.38; 8. GER, 4h1 3:25.55, 3:28.45, Tilgner 53.1, Nwachukwu 52.6, Ekpo-Umoh 51.66, Hoffmann 51.07, , ht: Tilgner 52.9, Nwachukwu 51.6, Ekpo-Umoh 50.94, Hoffmann 50.14

20K Walk

Dismissing the torrential rain as irrelevant ("it was better than a sunny or a hot day"), world champion and record holder Kaniskina (23) literally walked away with the Gold medal. Already 20 sec up by the time the field left the stadium, she was 41 sec ahead at 8k while at halfway (42:43) her margin had widened slightly to 43 sec. At that stage the chasing pack was led through in 43:28 by the 2006 world junior 10k champion Liu Hong, European champion Turova, 2000 Bronze medallist Vasco and world junior record holder Tatyana Kalmykova. Close behind in 43:29 were 2000 Silver medallist Plätzer and Yang Minxia, like Kalmykova a junior and like the Russian destined to be disqualified. Also prominent was European Bronze medallist Rigaudo but Sibileva, second fastest in the world this year with 1:26:16, had lost contact with the leaders. By 16k (1:08:31) Kaniskina's lead over Turova had widened to 59 sec, with Plätzer and Vasco a further 10 sec behind and followed by Liu and Rigaudo. That lead was narrowed to 36 sec at the finish, reached by Kaniskina in an Olympic record 1:26:31 as compared to her world record of 1:25:11. She covered the second half in 43:48 but the other medallists Plätzer (at 36 the oldest ever medallist in this event) and Rigaudo were slightly faster at 43:38 and 43:40, although fastest of all was Loughnane (43:37). Turova, who came to a stop at one point, struggled in the later stages to wind up 11th with a second half of 44:58. The standard was such that all of the first ten, with the exception of the winner, posted pbs, including national records for Norway, Spain, Portugal and Greece (by defending champion Tsoumeléka 9th). Further down there were records also for Lithuania and Britain (Jo Jackson 1:31:33). The first 12 all broke the old Olympic record and there were best ever times for places 8 to 14 in any women's 20k race walk.

20 Kilometers Walk, (21st) 10 kilometer times in 2nd column

1. Olga Kaniskina RUS, 1:26:31*, 42:43; 2. Kjersti Plätzer NOR, 1:27:07, 43:29; 3. Elisa Rigaudo ITA, 1:27:12, 43:32; 4. Liu Hong CHN, 1:27:17, 43:28; 5. Maria Vasco ESP, 1:27:25, 43:28; 6. Beatriz Pascual ESP, 1:27:44, 43:32; 7. Olive Loughnane IRL, 1:27:45, 44:08; 8. Ana Cabecinha POR, 1:27:46, 43:33; 9. Athanasia Tsoumeléka GRE, 1:27:54, 44:20; 10. Vera Santos POR, 1:28:14, 43:57

Passing Strange

When, in the space of half an hour on August 21, the United States' men's and women's 4x100 relay teams both bungled their first-round baton exchanges in Beijing, it shouldn't have been much of a surprise.

After all, the very first time the 4x100 was run in a major international competition – the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm – the United States team won its first-round heat in the world record time of 42.2 seconds, but was disqualified for passing out of the zone.

That was only the beginning. Since 1960, American men's and women's 4x100 teams competing in the Olympic Games and World Championships have been disqualified ten times for dropping the stick or passing out of the zone – and in another eight instances have lost likely medals because of inferior baton exchanges.

[NOTE: For a brief history of the U.S. Olympic and World Championships efforts in the 4x100, go to our web site, www.americantrackandfield.com]

The double 4x100 foul-up in Beijing, which cost the U.S. an almost certain two podium appearances, was seen as an embarrassment by the USOC, which bases much of its sales pitch to sponsors on American athletes' ability to win Olympic medals.

Perhaps as a consequence, CEO Doug Logan of USATF has appointed a seven-person panel charged with a sweeping review of the selection and preparation of the U.S. national track and field teams.

The panel includes Carl Lewis, winner of nine Olympic gold medals; retired Auburn coach Mel Rosen; Ralph Mann, 1972 Olympic silver medallist in the 400-meter hurdles, and currently one of the world's leading sports scientists; Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, 1984 Olympic gold medalist in the women's 100-meter hurdles and a successful business-woman who was Director of Olympic Training Centers from 1997 to 2000; and three employees of the U.S. Olympic

Committee: Doug Ingram, a former swimming coach who is USOC's Managing Director of Performance Services (Sports Medicine, Sports Science and Coaching); Steve Roush, another ex-coach with a swimming background who is USOC's Director of Sport Performance; and Jay Warwick, USOC's Director of Sports Partnerships, whose entire career before joining USOC was in taekwondo – as an athlete (eight national championships and an Olympic bronze medal), top-level coach, and Executive Director of USA Taekwondo.

Asked why three of the seven panelists he appointed were USOC employees, Mr. Logan replied that USOC supplies most of the money for USATF's High Performance effort.

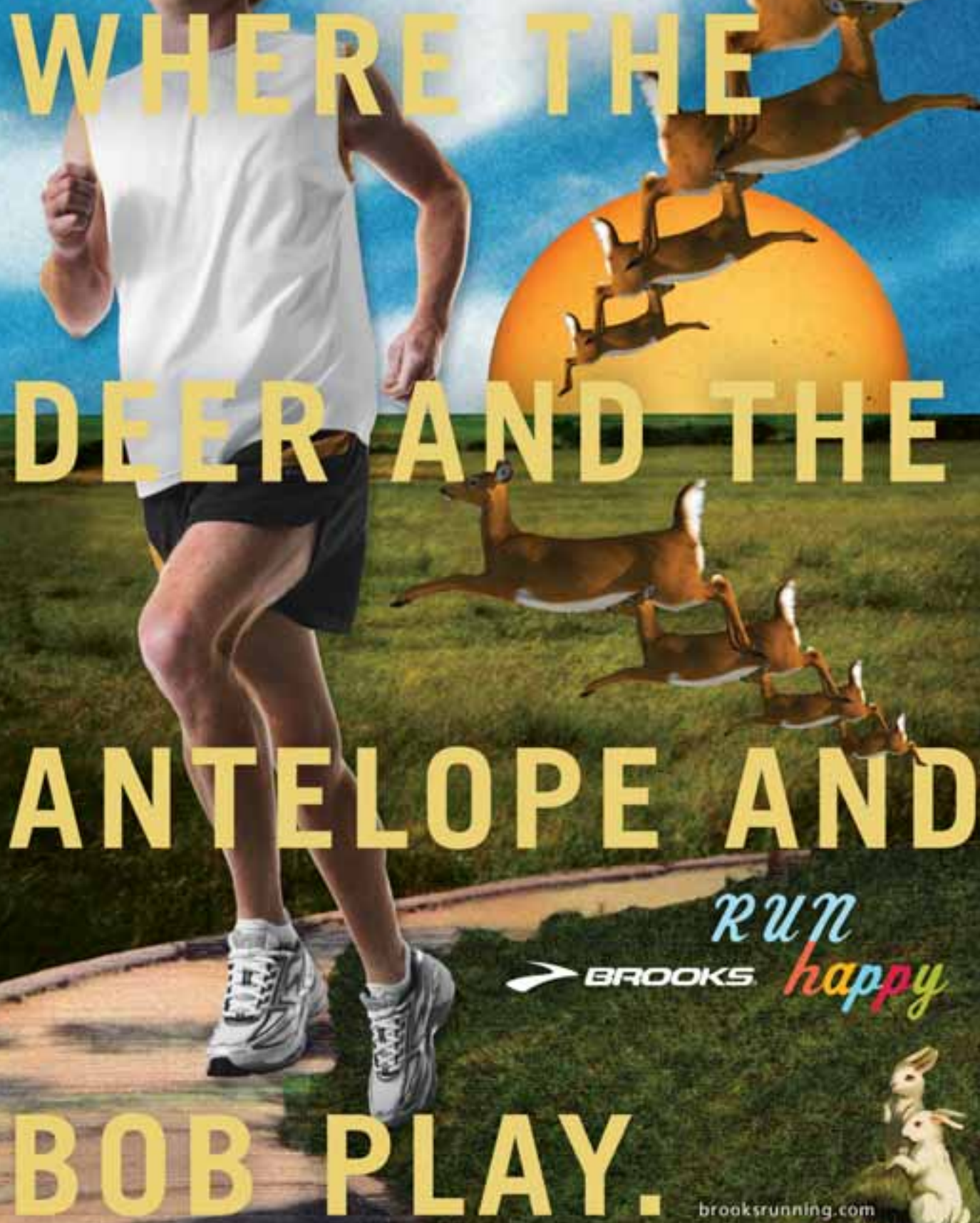
Here are a couple of thoughts for the panel. One problem inherent in our all-star 4x100 relay teams is that there is no Standard American Best Practice for exchanging the baton. Why not, then, develop a standardized baton-passing system that would be taught from grade school right through high school, college and beyond -- so that every sprinter on our Olympic teams would always know exactly what was expected of him or her?

A second thought concerns Olympic team camps. As noted in Dick Patrick's "Starting Blocks" column, page 10 of this issue, on the disastrous U.S. camp at Dalian, many of the athletes there probably would have done better if they'd stayed at home and arrived just before the Games began.

One of the U.S. best performances in Beijing was by an athlete who did just that. Stephanie Brown Trafton continued to train in familiar surroundings, competed in a couple of minor meets in California to hone her competitive edge, and brought home an unexpected gold medal in the women's discus.

Talk to her, panel.

– James Dunaway

A man with reddish hair, wearing a white tank top and black shorts, is running on a dirt path. He is wearing white sneakers. The background is a bright sunset with a large orange sun. Several deer and antelope are running alongside him, some in the air. In the bottom right corner, two small white rabbits are sitting on a patch of grass.

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