



What do the Olympic rings signify?

According to most accounts, the rings were adopted by Baron Pierre de Coubertin (founder of the modern Olympic Movement) after he saw a similar design on an artefact from ancient Greece. The five rings represent the five major regions of the world: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. Every national flag in the world includes at least one of the five colours, which are (from left to right) blue, yellow, black, green, and red.



SYDNEY, Sept 22 (AFP): Final updated Olympic medal table Friday:

C	G	S	B	T
USA	16	10	14	40
China	14	7	9	30
France	9	10	4	23
Australia	8	11	9	28
Italy	7	3	10	20
Netherlands	6	2	3	11
Russia	5	8	10	23
Romania	5	2	4	11
South Korea	4	5	7	16
Japan	4	4	3	11
Germany	3	5	7	15
Sweden	3	1	1	5
Bulgaria	3	1	0	4
Ukraine	2	6	3	11
Great Britain	2	5	3	10
Cuba	2	2	2	6
Poland	2	2	0	4
Hungary	2	1	1	4
Spain	2	0	1	3
Turkey	2	0	0	2
Slovakia	1	3	1	5
Switzerland	1	3	1	5
Indonesia	1	2	2	5
Canada	1	1	2	4
Mexico	1	1	0	2
Czech Rep	1	0	3	4
Azerbaijan	1	0	0	1
Colombia	1	0	0	1
Croatia	1	0	0	1
Finland	1	0	0	1
Lithuania	1	0	0	1
Brazil	0	2	1	3
Greece	0	2	1	3
Denmark	0	2	0	2
Belarus	0	1	6	7
Belgium	0	1	2	3
North Korea	0	1	1	2
South Africa	0	1	1	2
Chinese Taipei	0	1	1	2
Moldova	0	1	0	1
Nigeria	0	1	0	1
Uruguay	0	1	0	1
Yugoslavia	0	1	0	1
Costa Rica	0	0	2	2
Estonia	0	0	2	2
Armenia	0	0	1	1
Georgia	0	0	1	1
India	0	0	1	1
Kyrgyzstan	0	0	1	1
Kuwait	0	0	1	1
Latvia	0	0	1	1
New Zealand	0	0	1	1
Portugal	0	0	1	1
Thailand	0	0	1	1

Sydney admits gymnastics error

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Sydney 2000 organisers apologised Friday for the mistake that Russia claimed cost their star Svetlana Khorkina a chance of a gold medal in the individual overall women's Olympic gymnastics competition Thursday, reports AFP.

The height of the vault was incorrectly set two centimetres too low for the first two rotations and gymnasts were given the opportunity to take their vaults again — five took up the offer.

SOCOG apologised for the mistake but added: "It is the opinion of the international (gymnastic) federation FIG that this did not affect the outcome of the competition."

"Nevertheless we regret the fact that the error occurred."

Khorkina fell on landing on her first vault and dropped from first to 10th and Russian coach Valeri Dianov claimed this had upset her — she later had another fall on the uneven bars.

"We are very disappointed," Dianov said. "We were expecting she would be Olympic champion. But this jump robbed her. If the horse is lower, the technique has to be changed."

"By the time she was on the bars, she was an emotionally disturbed person."

The winner Andreea Raducan of Romania had no trouble with the vault when she jumped in the first rotation.

"I didn't notice a problem," Raducan said. "I decided to make two good vaults. It doesn't matter what is the height of the horse."

Bailey bows out

ATHLETICS

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Canada's defending 100m champion Donovan Bailey crashed out as the pretender to his crown — world record holder Maurice Greene — rushed into the semifinals here on Friday, reports AFP.

Bailey's agony was Greene's ecstasy as the brash American continued his relentless quest for Olympic gold — the only

trophy missing from his cabinet.

For Bailey it was a miserable way to end his reign in what will almost certainly be his last Olympics.

The 33-year-old Canadian has been suffering from a bout of flu and looked far from perfect when he finished third in the first round early Monday.

Bailey was last off the blocks after two false starts and when he realised he was not going to

make the top four and qualify for Saturday's semifinal he eased up and coasted over the line.

"I have been sick for four days but this is the Olympics and I had to run. It is a sad way to lose my Olympic title but I am a fighter and I don't lay down for anybody," said Bailey.

In contrast, Greene cruised into the 100m semifinals with a no nonsense second round dash.

Greene improved on his morning's performance to win his heat in 10.10 seconds but it was not fast enough to beat Boldon's first round 10.04 — the fastest ever seen in the Stadium Australia, the multi-million dollar centre piece of the Sydney Olympics.

"I came out today to piece my race together and it came to fruition beautifully but tomorrow is going to be a hard tough race and Obadele Thompson will be my hardest competition," he said.

Thompson, who finished fourth at the World Championships in Seville last year, declared his form with a blistering 10.04 to match Boldon's morning performance.

"I would like to win the gold for Donovan," said Thompson, a close friend of the Canadian. "I feel in the best form of my life and I am not even thinking of Greene," he added.

Boldon made sure there was no repeat of his stunning morning performance. He was upset with himself for coming out so fast.

He also knows that the easy part is over.

"The fun time is over. Now it gets serious. Tomorrow it's business time and I hope to deliver. The semifinals will be difficult because three of my training partners could end up in the same semifinal," he added.

There was more bad news for Canada when Bruny Surin, who finished third in his heat, announced that a nagging hamstring may force him to pull out of the semifinals.

"At the moment I would rate my chances at 50-50. I will make a decision in the morning. I know it is difficult because it is the Olympics but I do not want to ruin my next year which is my final season," he explained.

British sprint hopeful Dwain Chambers, who has twice this season finished ahead of Greene, won his second round heat and then rushed off clutching his right groin.

The Englishman looked as if he had hurt himself during a false start and was clearly in pain when he swept across the line.



END OF AN OLYMPIC DREAM: Donovan Bailey (R), one of the top favourites for the 100 metres sprint, grimaces as he pulls up while running alongside Jamaica's Lindel Frater in a second round heat of the men's 100 metres at the Olympic Stadium in Sydney yesterday. —Internet photo

Jones right on target

ATHLETICS

SYDNEY, Sept 22: American sprint queen Marion Jones underlined her power when she rushed into the Olympic 100m semifinals with a blistering run here on a cool Friday evening, reports AFP.

The 24-year-old, attempting to win a record breaking five golds, clocked 10.83secs, leaving her second round competition trailing in her wake.

Noone in any of the three

other heats came close to breaking the 11 second barrier.

"My coach Trevor told me to put one out there tonight so that's what I did," said Jones, relieved to be in the thick of the action.

"It has been kind of hard so far, just sitting around. Now I feel things are really underway. The Games have started," she added.

Merlene Ottey, determined to prove that at 40 she is not too old to be competing here, pow-

ered back after a slow start to win her heat in 11.08 — surging past Debbie Ferguson of the Bahamas in the final ten metres.

"A lot of people did not believe in me but I think I am running pretty good," said Ottey.

The presence of Ottey, who finished fourth in the Jamaican trials, had angered some of her teammates.

Half the athletics team lodged an official protest over her selection but sprint partner Beverly McDonald, who had a row with Ottey after the latter said that she had offered up her place in the event which McDonald denied, said peace has been made.

"We are all friends again. There is no problem with Merlene," said McDonald.

France's European champion Christine Arron had to cope with a sore throat as she struggled to qualify for Saturday's semifinals.

After a strong start she began to fade but managed to cling on to fourth spot and keep her medal hopes alive.

Sri Lanka's controversial Susanthika Jayasinghe just managed to make the semifinal when she finished fourth behind Sevedha Fynes of the Bahamas.

"I came into the race confident of winning but I got off to a bad start. Hopefully I can get it right for tomorrow night's semifinal," she said.

Thorpe in medley relay team

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Ian Thorpe is set to add to his cache of three gold and one silver at the Sydney Olympics after anchoring Australia's 4x100m medley relay in the heats here on Friday, reports AFP.

Thorpe, who set a world record in winning the 400m free and swam in the finals as Australia won both the 4x100m and 4x200m free relays, won't swim in the medley relay final.

But if the Aussies, who will be anchored by Michael Klim in Saturday's final, get a medal, Thorpe will be included thanks to his prelin swim.



JUST WAIT, THERE'S BETTER THINGS TO COME: US sprint queen Marion Jones gestures at the fans after finishing first in the first round heats of the 100 metres yesterday. —AFP photo



NUMERO UNO: US great Michael Johnson running in the 400 metres heats yesterday. —AFP photo

Now ban on Bulgaria

WEIGHTLIFTING

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Bulgaria's weightlifters were kicked out of the Olympics and banned for a year Friday, as drug scandals in the tarnished sport overshadowed an action-packed day of competition, reports AFP.

The Bulgarian team was sent packing following two further positive dope tests on its lifters, women's 48kg gold medalist Izabela Dragneva and 62kg bronze medalist Sevdalin Minchev.

The new test revelations followed the expulsion of men's 56kg class silver medalist Ivan Ivanov earlier in the week for a failed dope test.

Under the International Weightlifting Federation's "three strikes and out" policy, a federation can be banned from all international competition if three of its lifters test positive within a 12 month period.

The ban marks the second time Bulgaria's weightlifters have been sent home in disgrace from an Olympics. In 1988 they were disqualified after two gold medalists failed dope tests.

"The Bulgarian Weightlifting Federation is suspended forthwith for a period of not less than 12 months pending an investigation," the IWF said Friday.

"All remaining lifters as well as officers from the Bulgarian Weightlifting Federation will not be able to take part in the Olympic Games."

All three lifters had tested positive for the diuretic, furosemide, which can be used to mask steroid use or to help athletes lose weight.

IWF vice-president Sam Coffa said the governing body believed the drugs had been

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All's in wonderland Popov's dream dashed

SWIMMING

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Gary Hall Jr and Anthony Ervin shared the gold and the glory Friday, ending Alexander Popov's quest for a third straight Olympic title when they finished tied for first in the men's 50m freestyle, reports AFP.

Popov had already missed out on a slice of Olympic history when he failed to win a third consecutive 100m free title.

In his second chance in the 50m, the Russian great finished sixth in 22.24sec, only three months after he lowered the world record to 21.64sec.

Hall, who finished second behind Popov in both freestyle sprints at the 1996 Games, and his 19-year-old training partner Ervin, both touched the wall in 21.98sec for an All-American dead heat.

"It took me a bit of time to realise we tied," Hall said. "I knew it was going to be close, but I didn't know it was going to be that close."

It wasn't the first time an

Olympic swimming final has ended in a dead heat.

In 1972, Gunnar Larsson and Tim McKee touched the wall in the men's 400m medley in 4:31.98. Officials went to the next decimal place and awarded Larsson the gold — two-thousandths of a second in front of McKee.

After that the rules were changed, and in 1984 Carrie Steinsieffer and Nancy Hogshead of the United States shared the gold in the 100m freestyle after finishing tied in 55.92sec.

Pieter van den Hoogenband was third. The dazzling Dutch swimmer had set a world record en route to dethroning Popov in the 100m free and also set a world record en route to the 200m freestyle gold.

"At first I thought I was tied with Pieter," Hall said, a natural assumption given the way Van den Hoogenband and his Dutch teammate Inge de Bruijn have flourished here.

De Bruijn set her third world record of the Games on Friday, topping the semifinals of the 50m free in 24.13sec. She lowered her own previous record of 24.39, taking the total of world records for the meet to 12 — an average of two a day.

None of those belong to Brooke Bennett, but the 20-year-old American continued to close in on the distance world marks established by Janet Evans more than 10 years ago.

Bennett became the third-fastest performer in the history of the women's 800m freestyle as she completed her 400m-800m double.

Bennett clocked an Olympic record of 8min 19.67sec to defend the 800m title she won in Atlanta.

"I'm so overwhelmed being here," Bennett said. "Two gold medals and Olympic record. I don't think I've gotten hold of myself yet."

Ukrainian Yana Klochkova, who set a world record in the 400m individual medley and added the 200m individual medley gold to her cache earlier this week, finished second in 8:22.66 — inside the top 10 of all time.

American Kaitlin Sandeno was third in 8:24.29.

Lars Frolander grabbed the gold medal that was missing from Sweden's collection, shocking world record-holder Michael Klim in the 100m butterfly final.

Frolander runner-up to Klim at the 1998 World Championships, was lying third at the turn and powered past the Australian in the final 25 meters to win in 52.00sec.

Klim, whose world record stands at 51.81, took second in 52.18 and fellow Aussie Geoff Huegill — who in the semifinals joined Klim as the only two men to swim under 52 seconds — was third in 52.22.

It was another huge disappointment for Klim, who opened the Games with a bang on Saturday when he set a 100m freestyle world record in leading off Australia's victorious 4x100m free relay team.



BOWING IN THE AIR: China's Li Na in the course of her 10-metre platform diving competition at the Sydney International Aquatic Centre yesterday. —AFP photo