

Star Sport

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Lizzie launched

Lizzie the Paralympic Mascot was unveiled Monday at the Main Press Centre at the Sydney Olympics.

Lizzie, a lizard, will be the face of the Paralympics.

The Paralympics is proving a big draw with 80 per cent of tickets now sold just four weeks before the start of the Games.

But the 540,560 tickets moved still falls short of the final target by 10,000.

For the Opening Ceremony 62,000 of the 87,000 tickets have been sold while all 449 wheelchair seats have been snapped up.

Lizzie, a strong, tenacious and energetic frill-necked lizard, was chosen to carry the Paralympic message of performance, power and pride to Australian and international audience because of her determined will and attitude. Source: AFP

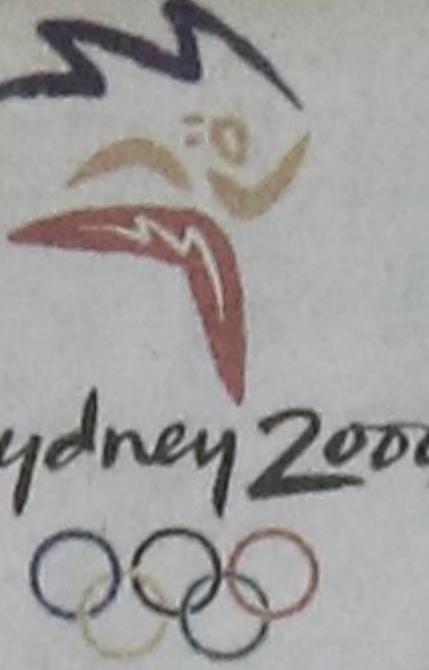


SYDNEY, Sept 25 (AFP): Updated medals table Monday.

Country	G	S	B	T
USA	23	14	21	58
China	21	14	13	48
Russia	14	14	19	47
Australia	12	20	11	43
France	12	13	6	31
Italy	11	6	11	28
Romania	10	4	5	19
Netherlands	7	5	3	15
Great Britain	6	8	5	19
Germany	5	9	15	29
Japan	5	4	4	13
South Korea	4	6	8	18
Poland	4	4	1	9
Bulgaria	4	3	2	9
Ukraine	3	6	5	14
Cuba	3	4	2	9
Sweden	3	3	1	7
Hungary	3	1	1	5
Spain	3	0	2	5
Greece	2	4	1	7
Czech Rep	2	1	3	6
Austria	2	1	0	3
Finland	2	1	0	3
Lithuania	2	0	1	3
Slovenia	2	0	0	2
Turkey	2	0	0	2
Switzerland	1	5	2	8
Indonesia	1	3	2	6
Slovakia	1	3	1	5
Belarus	1	1	8	10
Canada	1	1	5	7
Mexico	1	1	0	2
New Zealand	1	0	3	4
Ethiopia	1	0	2	3
Croatia	1	0	1	2
Latvia	1	0	1	2
Azerbaijan	1	0	0	1
Colombia	1	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1
Mozambique	1	0	0	1
Brazil	0	3	2	5
Belgium	0	2	2	4
Denmark	0	2	1	3
Jamaica	0	1	2	3
South Africa	0	1	2	3
Chinese Taipei	0	1	2	3
Kenya	0	1	1	2
North Korea	0	1	1	2
Norway	0	1	1	2
Argentina	0	1	0	1
Ireland	0	1	0	1
Moldova	0	1	0	1
Nigeria	0	1	0	1
Trinidad	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
Georgia	0	0	2	2
Algeria	0	0	1	1
Armenia	0	0	1	1
Barbados	0	0	1	1
Iceland	0	0	1	1
India	0	0	1	1
Kyrgyzstan	0	0	1	1
Kuwait	0	0	1	1
Portugal	0	0	1	1
Qatar	0	0	1	1
Thailand	0	0	1	1



GAILE DEVERS: US icon Gail Devers crossing a hurdle during the women's 100-metre hurdles Round 1 heat yesterday. Devers is the current world record holder in the event with a time of 12.37sec.



Olympic Special



Michael 'Legend' Johnson

ATHLETICS

SYDNEY, Sept 25: Michael Johnson turned from greatness into a living legend when he became the first man to successfully defend the Olympic 400 metres title here on Monday, reports AFP.

The 33-year-old, already one of the greatest athletes in the sport's history thanks to his 400m-200m double at Atlanta

four years ago and the two world records he holds, swept home in 43.84secs.

Fellow American Alvin Harrison (44.40) took the silver and Jamaica's Gregory Haughton (44.70) snatched the bronze.

For Johnson it was a spectacular farewell Olympic appearance.

"This is my last major competition," he announced. "I was here to defend my last individual."



BORN TO CONQUER: Michael Johnson crossing the finish line ahead of the pack to win gold in the men's 400-metre yesterday. Johnson became the first man in history to successfully defend his Olympic 400 metres title.

Marvelous Mutola

SYDNEY, Sept 25: A battling Maria Mutola secured Mozambique's first ever Olympic gold when she powered to victory in the 800m final here on Monday, reports AFP.

The 28-year-old 1998 Commonwealth Games champion pushed to the front in the final 20 meters to come home in 1:56.15.

Austria's Stephanie Graf (1:56.64) took the silver and Britain's Kelly Holmes (1:56.80) the bronze.

As Mutola crossed the line she broke into a huge grin as she realised just what her win meant.

Graf, the European indoor champion, rushed over and embraced Mutola.

"I love you," she told her.

Mutola was almost overcome with emotion as she left the track after a lap of honour, wrapped in the Mozambique flag.

Edwards' dream comes true

SYDNEY, Sept 25: Britain's Jonathan Edwards finally achieved his lifelong goal of an Olympic gold medal here on Monday, adding the one major omission on his CV to a career record, reports AFP.

India and Pakistan, who ruled world hockey till the 1970s when Europe made it's presence felt on synthetic turf, have lost their grip over the Olympic gold which was once theirs almost by right.

India won the last of its eight golds at the western-boycotted Moscow Games in 1980. Pakistan's third and final gold came at Los Angeles four years later.

Since then it's been a downhill ride, with India finishing eighth at Atlanta and Pakistan sixth, their worst Olympic placings ever.

The Koreans, meanwhile, emerged from the shadow of their famous Asian rivals to be fifth at Atlanta and third at the elite six-nation Champions Trophy in May.

The job ahead for the Asians is fraught with danger.

Poland, who last played in the Olympics 20 years ago, will not allow the Indians an easy outing, evident from their 4-1 shock of Atlanta silver-medallists Spain and a rousing 5-3 draw against Argentina.

"Poland are pretty dangerous because they never give up," said Indian coach Vasudevan Bhaskaran.

"They are down one moment and suddenly turn things around with two quick goals. We can't afford to give them space."

India's only defeat in the competition came against the Koreans, the perfect role models for Poland with their swift counter-attacks.

The Dutch, the reigning world and Olympic champions, will take Pakistan lightly at their own peril.

The unpredictable, but brilliant

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HUNTED HUNTER: An AFP file photo of US shot putter C J Hunter who is also the husband of sprint queen Marion Jones. The International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) yesterday revealed that Hunter has tested positive for steroids from a test taken during a competition Oslo, Norway on July 28. Hunter is not a competitor at the Sydney Games.

Haunted Hunter

ATHLETICS

SYDNEY, Sept 25: A drug scandal involving the husband of American sprint star Marion Jones rocked the Olympics earlier this month. His wife Jones is attempting to win a record five gold medals here and won the 100 metres gold medal on Saturday.

Hunter, who is accredited as Jones' coach in Sydney, promptly vowed to defend himself against the drug allegations.

"I know what's going on and I am aware of the allegations and I am going to defend myself vigorously," he said in a statement.

He said the IOC believed five American athletes who competed in the 1998 Olympics had failed drug tests but were subsequently allowed to compete.

Norwegian IOC member Joachim Koss called on US and International athletics authorities to come clean on doping in

times. The accepted limit of the banned anabolic steroid nandrolone had been found in Hunter's test sample.

Hunter withdrew from the Olympics citing a knee injury earlier this month. His wife Jones is attempting to win a record five gold medals here and won the 100 metres gold medal on Saturday.

"I would not be surprised. I would not be astonished," he told reporters, hinting at a wider problem of concealed dope tests in American athletics.

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FREEWOMAN: Australia's darling Cathy Freeman running towards glory during the women's 400 metres final yesterday. Freeman got rid of all the pressures on her by taking the gold.

—AFP photo

glad it is over.

Graham had no complaints about winning the silver.

"I'm exhausted but it feels great," she said. "I knew I was in front but unfortunately I did not have it in me to hold on."

Freeman is a great, great sprinter," added the Jamaican.

Merry had nothing but praise for Freeman.

"She ran her socks off," she said.

"As for me, I'm over the moon. I have an Olympic bronze and I ran the fastest 400m race of my life."

It was an emotionally charged race as Freeman was being hailed as the winner even before the Games began more than 10 days ago.

But despite the intense pressure Freeman, unbeaten over the distance for two years, delivered to an ecstatic crowd desperate to see an Aussie gold on the track.

When the field got ready for the start the helpers and volunteers inside the stadium left their stalls and positions — all wanting to be part of Freeman's run into the history books.

Dressed in a body suit that covered her from head to toe Freeman appeared to be propelled around the track by the roar from the crowd but it was only in the final 50 meters that she managed to get ahead of Graham.

Freeman had started in lane six and it was only as they hit the final bend that she became fully aware that Graham, who was in lane three, was threatening to deprive her of the gold.

After crossing the line Freeman sank to the track and sat holding her head — looking stunned as the fact she had finally done it began to sweep over her.

It was only several minutes later that she rose and allowed a smile to cross her face.

The first emotion was relief. When you have trained so long for something the emotion is just so intense. I don't think it

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