

# Golden Stars

## ATHLETICS MUNA LEE (USA)

Two weeks after her car was struck by a drunken driver and her shoulder was hurt, this thin 27-year-old speedster known more for her 200m efforts beat two former world champions to win the 100 at the US Olympic Trials.

Lee finished seventh in the 200 at the 2004 Olympics and in 2005 helping the Americans claim gold in the 4x100 relay at Helsinki, where she finished seventh in the 100m.

The Kansas City-born star who now trains in Texas follows in the footsteps of another Kansan Comet - retired 100-meter star Maurice Greene.

help given him by his adopted homeland by running for the United States in the 1,500m at the Olympics.

Now 23, he majored in hotel and restaurant management and dreams of one day building a tourist hotel in Sudan to help create a peaceful environment there.

With talk of Olympic protests in China over support of the crisis in the western Sudan region called Darfur, Lomong has lived the horror. To conquer the crisis and run at the Olympics will likely be an easier dream to achieve than bringing peace in Sudan.

## USAIN BOLT (JAM)

May 31, 2008 on a rainy night in New York and a wet

finished third in Japan.

Even Powell's countryman Usain Bolt, the 100 world record holder, does not frighten Gay, who recorded a wind-aided time of 9.68 and another chrono of 9.77 at the U.S. trials.

While Bolt has ran .05 seconds quicker and Powell has stopped the clock .03 seconds faster than Gay, that will count for nothing when the gun goes in the Olympic final.

In the face of Justin Gatlin's doping problems Gay says God is his own doping product, that he has come this far clean and will continue in that manner.

## YELENA ISINBAYEVA (RUS)

*The US men's basketball team managed only a bronze medal, with the star-studded NBA side embarrassingly beaten by Puerto Rico, Lithuania and Argentina. Athens 2004.*

track at the Icahn Stadium on Randall Island as the athletes entered the blocks for the 100m with a favourable wind.

Jamaica's Usain Bolt made headlines around the world with a stunning new world record of 9.72secs as he underlined his credentials as a serious gold medal contender at the Beijing Olympics.

American world champion Tyson Gay only saw the back of Bolt who shaved .02secs off the previous mark held by compatriot Asafa Powell.

His obvious nickname is "Lightning Bolt", a fitting moniker considering his time of 9.76secs on May 3 in Kingston, the second fastest time ever and in only his third 100m race.

As the world record holder, Bolt is on the verge of a rare 100m-200m double that has not been witnessed at the Games since 1984 when Carl Lewis pulled it off in Los Angeles.

## LOPEZ LOMONG (USA)

At six years old in 1991, Lomong's family fled Sudan on foot to escape an attack by the Janjaweed militia, spending three days in the wilderness to avoid capture.

Separated from his family when they arrived at the Kenyan border, he spent 10 years at a refugee camp, becoming one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan", 3,800 children relocated to the United States.

He became a US citizen last July and intends to return the

## TYSON GAY (USA)

Sprint sensation Tyson Gay entered an elite club of just three triple champions at the 2007 world championships, joining Maurice Greene and Carl Lewis when winning gold in the 100, 200 and 4x100 in Osaka.

The spotlight will now be firmly focused on the American rather than his chief rival and one-time 100-meter world record holder Asafa Powell of Jamaica, who

Undisputed grande dame of the pole vault the Russian beauty Yelena Isinbayeva is red hot favourite to retain her Olympic title at Beijing.

She is European, world and Olympic champion and looks set to dominate the discipline until London 2012 and beyond.

Isinbayeva frequently

*Shooter Matthew Emmons was on target for a second Olympic title when, in the final stages, he mistakenly shot at his rival's target. He ended in a deflating eighth position. Athens 2004.*

batters her own record but rarely raises the bar more than just one centimetre at a time thereby claiming substantial prize money.

Despite the self evident financial gain her stated aim is also to overcome the 35 world records set in pole vault by another Russian, the great Sergei Bubka.

To that end she has enlisted the help of Bubka's former coach Vitali Petrov, who guided her over the 'mythical 5m mark' at London's Crystal Palace in July 2005, a landmark leap that leaves other women in the sport trailing in her wake.

## SWIMMING

### LAURE MANAUDOU (FRA)

Reigning Olympic and world champion Laure Manaudou has been making more headlines out of the pool of late, but Beijing is just the place where this fiery French woman can silence her critics.

Manaudou was only 17 when out of the blue she won the 400m freestyle gold at Athens, going on to take silver at the 800m freestyle and a bronze from the 100m backstroke.

Four more gold medals (400m and 800m free, 100m back and 200m medley) were won at the 2006 European championships, then at the beginning of last year she scooped five medals at the World Championships.

That was the calm before the storm - and her very messy public split with her Italian boyfriend as well as her long-time coach Philippe Lucas.

She has struggled to regain her top form this year, taking gold and silver at the European championships in March, followed by a below-par win in the 1500m freestyle at the Scottish championships.

## MICHAEL PHELPS (USA)

Michael Phelps will again race for eight gold medals to try and outdo Mark Spitz's Games record of seven titles.

The American champion won seven golds in eight events and set five world records at the 2007 World Championships in Australia, and said that he was gunning for the same eight races in Beijing.

Phelps became a worldwide household name by winning six gold medals during a spectacular display at the Athens Olympics.

Spitz's seven gold-medal standard has stood since the 1972 Munich Olympics, though Phelps is now challenging his mantle as the greatest swimmer of all time.

He now has 11 world titles and 25 world records to his name and the "Baltimore Kid" is a long way from being finished.

## STEPHANIE RICE (AUS)

At the Australian Olympic qualifiers, Stephanie Rice set world records in the 200m and 400m medleys and the fact she is also a beauty made her an overnight media sensation.

Going into the qualifiers with bronze medals from the 2007 worlds over both

*Using a banner to represent the peninsula, athletes from the two Koreas paraded together at the opening ceremony. Sydney 2000.*

distances, Rice was part of the Speedo sensation. On the opening night of the Australian Olympic swimming trials, Rice shaved 1.43

seconds off American Katie Hoff's previous 400m medley world record of 4min 32.89sec, with a new time of 4min 31.46sec, or six seconds faster than her own previous best time. Four days later Rice, then 19, erased swimming's second oldest long course world record from the books, adding the 200m individual medley mark to the tally in 2min 8.92sec, slicing 0.80

seconds off the previous world record held by China's Yan Yan Wu, set in Shanghai in 1997.

Rice thereby carved 2.5 seconds off her previous best time set at the 2007 Melbourne world championships and established herself - the reigning Commonwealth champion in both events - as the swimmer to beat in both

races at the Beijing Olympics.

## GYMNASTICS

### YANG WEI (CHN)

China's champion gymnast Yang Wei, the most decorated in Asian Games history, is looking to put his Athens heartbreak behind him and deliver the home crowd a coveted all round gold.

It was so near yet so far in 2004 when a fall from the high bar handed a dramatic victory to American Paul Hamm, as the slightly-built Yang crashed out of medal contention.

That shock was doubled when China, the then defending Olympic champion, was earlier pipped by Hamm after another epic encounter at the 2003 world championships in Anaheim, America.

But with the home crowd's willing Yang will banish his Olympic disappointment and top the podium.

China's 2006 and 2007 world all around champion started his winning ways in 1998 when he took gold in the floor at the Asian games, going on to take individual silver at Sydney in 2000.

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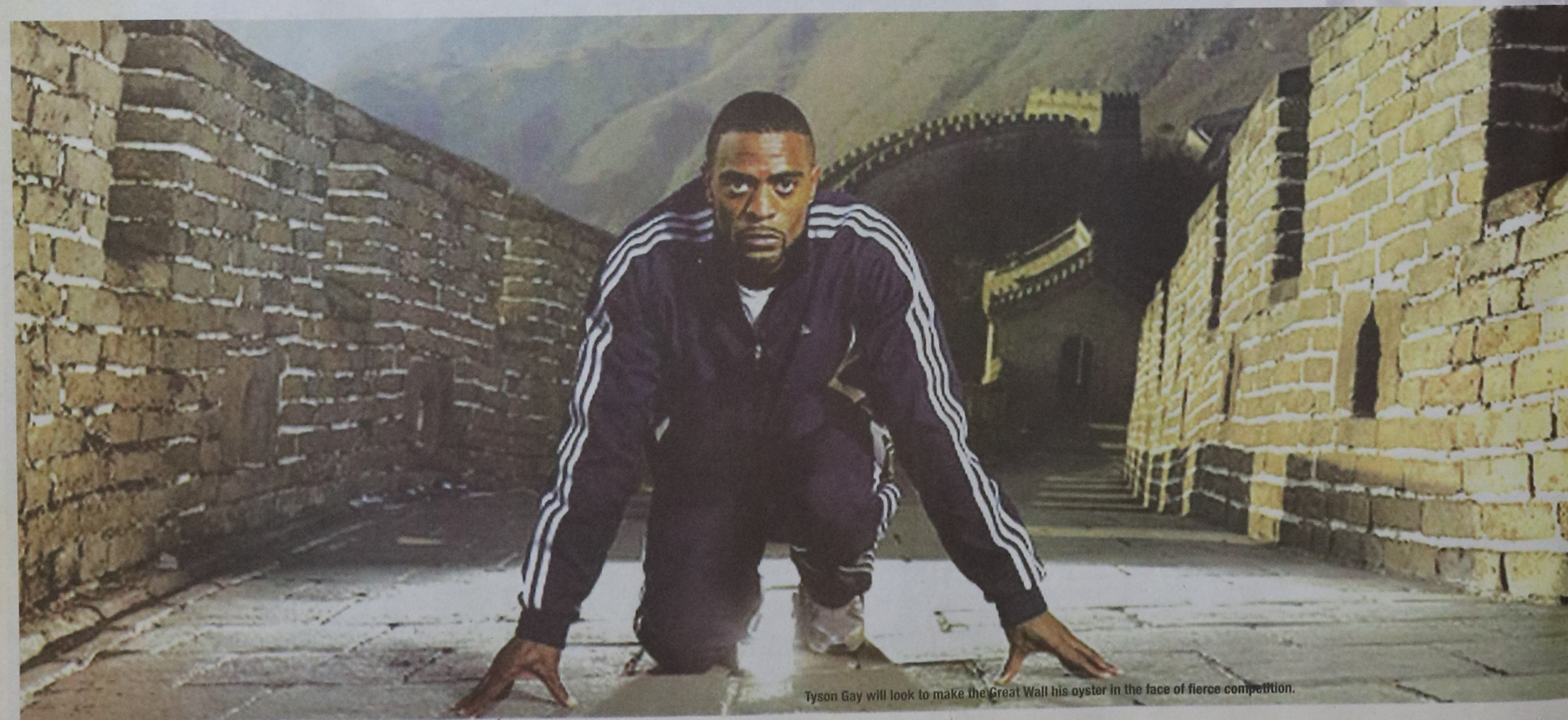


Usain 'The Lightning' Bolt will look to strike fast and hard this summer.

*Sirivanh Ketavong of Laos, who crossed the finish line an hour after winner Fatuma Roba of Ethiopia, could not feature in the final results as the sheet was finalised and sent 20 minutes before she finished. Atlanta 1996.*



Spaniard Rafael Nadal will look to continue his searing form into Beijing and capture an Olympic Gold.



Tyson Gay will look to make the Great Wall his oyster in the face of fierce competition.