



Alexander Grimm of Germany competes in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games men's single K1 Kayak final at the Shunyi Rowing and Canoeing Park in Beijing yesterday. Grimm won the gold in this event.

Noguchi pulls out

AP, Beijing

Reigning Olympic champion Mizuki Noguchi has pulled out of Sunday's Olympic marathon because of a lingering left thigh injury.

The Japanese delegation announced her withdrawal on Tuesday.

Noguchi, the 2003 world championship silver medalist, had hoped to become the first woman to repeat as Olympic marathon champion.

The 4-foot-11, 88-pound runner had been bothered by the injury for some time and underwent a series of tests in Japan after returning from her training in St. Moritz, Switzerland. Noguchi, who turned 30 last month, pulled out of last year's world championships because she doesn't like running in the heat.

However, she survived sweltering conditions in the mid-90s to win the event in the Athens Olympics, beating favored Catherine Ndereba of Kenya by 12 seconds.

Britain's Paula Radcliffe, the world record-holder, was a major disappointment in that race, collapsing because of dehydration after leading much of the race. Radcliffe, 34, told the BBC on Tuesday that she would race in the marathon in Beijing. She too has been bothered by a thigh injury.

"Of course, I could do with a bit more time," Radcliffe said, "but I'll just go in and give it a go."

Hui comes up trumps

AP, Beijing

China added to its weightlifting gold rush Tuesday with Liao Hui winning the men's 69-kilogram category.

Liao, 20, snatched 158 kg (348.3 pounds) and heaved 190 kg (418.9 pounds) in the clean and jerk for a total of 348 kg (767.2 pounds).

Frenchman Vencelas Dabaya-Tientcheu got the silver ahead of European champion Tigran Martirosyan of Armenia.

China has now won all five of the weight categories it has participated in so far.

Liao, last year's world champion, missed his first snatch at 153 kg (337.3 pounds), but got the second. He then took 158 kg (348.3 pounds) in his third lift, leading the contest going into the clean and jerk.

He again failed his first attempt, but rebounded by taking 185 kg (407.9 pounds) and 190 kg (418.9 pounds) in his following clean and jerks.

Dabaya-Tientcheu, who had already clinched the silver, loaded the bar to a massive 197 kg (434.3 pounds), which would have tied the world record. But he quickly realized attempting to lift it was futile.

He gripped the bar, felt its weight and walked away, shaking his head.

Dabaya-Tientcheu finished with a total of 338 kg (745.2 pounds). Martirosyan achieved the same weight but had to settle for bronze because of a higher body weight than then Frer...nman.

Games transcend Beijing

AP, Beijing

The Beijing Games are not only about Beijing.

The Olympics are thriving outside the Chinese capital too, and fans and athletes say they are having just as much fun despite being miles (kilometers) away from the heart of the games.

They don't have the pleasure of walking around with the Bird's Nest or the Water Cube in the background, but they are still enjoying the Olympic experience.

The equestrian, sailing, rowing and soccer competitions carried the Olympic spirit to seven other locations: Hong Kong, Qingdao, Beixiaoying Town, Shenyang, Tianjin, Shanghai and Qinhuangdao.

The equestrian events were moved to Hong Kong because of quarantine restrictions on mainland China, the soccer matches were scattered across the nation to accommodate the tournament's schedule and stadium demands, and the sailing and rowing events also needed specific facilities.

"The Olympic spirit is the same here," Brazil coach Dunga said in Shenyang, one of the four soccer venues. "Even though we are not in Beijing, we see that everybody here is really into the games. There were more than 90,000 fans watching soccer in just two days. I think that shows how much interest there is."

Soccer alone drew nearly 500,000 fans in the first four days of competition, when 28 matches were played in the four venues.

In Qinhuangdao, some 190

miles (300 kilometers) northeast of the capital, members of the U.S. women's soccer team didn't have any complaints either.

"I think that it is an amazing atmosphere, and I think that the people have been great and the support at the stadium has been great," defender Heather Mitts said.

Athletes felt the same way in the rowing venue in Beixiaoying Town, about 20 miles (30 kilometers) from Beijing.

"When I came over the top of the conveyer belt and saw that many people around the stands, it didn't feel like any less of an Olympics," said 19-year-old American canoeer Benn Fraker, who spent the first two weeks of training living in the Olympic village before moving to a hotel near the venue.

To try to keep some of the athletes from feeling like outsiders, some of the venues even organized local opening ceremonies for those who couldn't make it to Beijing for the big opener on Friday.

The ceremony in the coastal city of Qingdao, the sailing venue 300 miles (480 kilometers) southeast of the capital, drew thousands of spectators, including representatives of each of the 62 nations competing there.

In Hong Kong, 1,200 miles

(1,900 kilometers) south of Beijing,

the festivities included a parade of

nations and even a torch-lighting

ceremony timed to the one in

Beijing.

Most of the athletes outside the

capital chose not to attend the

main ceremony to avoid losing

training time at their venues. The U.S. men's soccer squad ended making the short 70-mile (110-kilometer) trip from Tianjin, but the women's squad didn't have the same chance.

Mitts was one of the players who regretted missing the festivities in Beijing.

"We were watching it on TV like all the fans back home," she said. "It's unfortunate, but it is what it is."

It was the second time the defender was forced to skip the event. She also missed it at the 2004 Athens Games.

In Shenyang, the Olympic atmosphere is so much like in Beijing that even pollution is here. The industrial city 500 miles (800 kilometers) to the north has a similar smog to the one that has attracted the world's attention in the capital.

There were protests away from Beijing too. In Hong Kong, activists displayed the Tibetan flag and chanted pro-democracy slogans at the equestrian event.

No matter what, fans are thrilled

to have the Olympics come to them.

"You know, transportation is not

simple here in China," said 59-

year-old Sixto Bareiro, a Brazilian

who lives in a city an hour's flight

from Shenyang. "It's not everybody

who has the time or the money to

go to Beijing. If they didn't bring

some of these competitions to near

us, there was no way we could have

watched the games. I'm just glad

they did. Now we can say we were

part in the Beijing Olympics too."

Even away from Beijing,

Dream comes true for Khade

AP, Beijing

India's Virdhawal Khade lived the Olympic dream at the Beijing Games on Tuesday when he competed in the 100 metres freestyle event and won his heat.

The 16-year-old from Bangalore claimed the third heat in 50.07 seconds, beating other similar-ranked swimmers from South Korea, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan home in a proud moment.

It didn't matter that his time ranked him 42nd of the 64 qualifiers and was some 2.27secs slower than Australia's world record holder Eamon Sullivan (47.80), he still had his moment in the spotlight.

"I feel pretty good about swimming with the fastest swimmers in the world, I feel proud. It's an honour," Khade said.

Khade said he had been fired up by India's first-ever individual Olympic gold medal by Abhinav Bindra in the men's 10m Air Rifle event on Monday.

"I was happy that India won our individual first gold medal yesterday, everyone is really pumped and excited about it," he said.

Khade said he finds it difficult to train regularly as he studies in Mumbai and trains in Bangalore.

"It's always been tough. I train in Bangalore and study commerce near Mumbai, it's about 600 miles between the two. I go there only about once or twice a year," he said.

"I study when I train, maybe one hour a day with seven hours of training a day."

"I think I burn about 4,000 calories a day. India is known for unhealthy food, but I mostly eat Indian food and pasta twice a week."

"The curries and rice help to meet the amount of carbohydrates I need."

Leisel buries ghosts



SWIMMING

AP, Beijing

Michael Phelps joined Olympic icons Paavo Nurmi, Carl Lewis, Mark Spitz and Larysa Latynina as the only athletes to win nine summer Games gold medals with a dominant 200m freestyle triumph Tuesday.

The U.S. superstar, vying to break swimmer Spitz's record of seven golds at a single Olympics, captured his third title and third world record in as many events in Beijing as he sliced nine-tenths of a second off his own world mark with a time of 1min 42.96sec.

The masterful performance from the 23-year-old inspired his teammates and signalled a US gold rush at the Water Cube.

Aaron Peirsol and Natalie Coughlin both defended the 100m backstroke golds they won in Athens - Peirsol in a world-record time - as the mighty Americans took their total of swimming gold to five after 12 finals.

Peirsol said Phelps's performance here was something that might surface in sport "once in a century".

"The way he is attacking this meet - he isn't just winning he is destroying world records on the way," Peirsol said. "It's awesome to watch."

"The United States are on a roll right now, hopefully we can keep it up," he said.

It was Phelps who got the star-spangled show rolling in the 200 free.

After increasing his lead on every lap, Phelps led by a body length in the final 50m. He was turning around to check his time as South Korean Park Tae-Hwan touched for silver in 1:44.85 - an Asian record that was nevertheless

1.89sec adrift.

American Peter Vanderkaay was third in 1:45.14.

"I just wanted to be out on my own, which I had done by the 100 metres mark - that was my goal," Phelps said. "I was out in open water, and I was in the outside lane, which makes it difficult for the other guys to see me."

Phelps said he was wary coming home of fast-finishing Park, but the South Korean said there was simply nothing he could do.

"Phelps swam so fast," Park said. "It's my honor to compete with him."

Phelps improved on the 200m free bronze that he won in Athens behind Australian great Ian Thorpe and Dutch star Pieter van den Hoogenband.

In the four years since, Phelps had seized the world record and the world title in the event.

With the gruelling 400m individual medley safely won in world record time, and a thrilling US triumph over France in the 4x100m free relay, Phelps has said the hardest part of his eight-gold quest is behind him.

He was back on the blocks in the semifinals of the 200m butterfly, another event in which he holds the world record.

"I just wanted to win my race and set everything up for tomorrow," Phelps said after booking his place in the fly final in an Olympic record.

"I have an afternoon off, do some recovery and I'll probably have to reshuffle, get all that stuff done and set up the opportunity to have the perfect swim," added Phelps, who must swim 17 times over nine days in order to surpass Spitz.

Peirsol, bidding to repeat his backstroke double from Athens, won the 100m back in a world record 52.54sec.

Peirsol, who has held the record

since 2004, lowered the mark to 52.89 set at the US trials in Omaha on July 1.

"I was a little bit surprised, a little bit relieved, absolutely elated," Peirsol said. "It's not every day you feel that way - you never get used to it."

American Matt Grevers was second while Russian Arkady Vyatchanin and Hayden Stoeckel of Australia finished in a dead heat for bronze.

Coughlin, who had surrendered her 100m backstroke world record to Kirsty Coventry in the semifinals, clocked 58.96 in the final to hold off the Zimbabwean, who took silver in 59.19. American Margaret Hoelzer was third in 59.34.

"It hasn't really sunk in yet," Coughlin said. "When I saw the clock, I thought I had made a mistake and I only knew I had won when I saw the number one by my name."

Coventry claimed her second silver medal of the Games, after her runner-up finish in the 400m medley.

Hoelzer was delighted to come up ahead in a tight battle for bronze.

"It was a close race. The third, fourth and fifth were less than a tenth of a second apart," she said.

Australian world record-holder Leisel Jones stopped the US charge with a victory in the women's 100m breaststroke.

The 22-year-old, who settled for silver and bronze in the individual breaststroke events in 2004 after going in as favorite, clocked 1:05.17 to claim the gold that eluded her in Athens, with American Rebecca Soni taking silver in personal best of 1:06.73. Austria's Mirna Jukic claimed the bronze in 1:07.34.

"I couldn't care less about the time," Jones said. "An Olympic gold is an Olympic gold. The time, the race, none of it matters - it's all about the gold."



Australia's gold medalist Leisel Jones (L) is all smiles alongside Austria's bronze medalist Mirna Jukic after winning the women's 100m breaststroke event at the National Aquatics Center in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on Tuesday.

Nadal thrashes Hewitt



TENNIS

AP, Beijing

Rafael Nadal sent out a stark message of intent to contenders for the Olympic singles crown with a crushing 6-1, 6-2 defeat of Australian Lleyton Hewitt here on Tuesday.

The Spanish number two seed, who will take over as men's world number one next week, asserted full control of the match early on, breaking Hewitt at 2-1 up in the first set.

The Australian former number one had played a gruelling doubles match that stretched into the early hours of Tuesday after going to 18-16 in the third set, and his tiredness showed, notably on his backhand

returns.

Hewitt, currently ranked 38 in the world, managed to break Nadal in the first game of the second set in a short-lived revival but the Spaniard stole the march again and soon had the match wrapped up.

Also in blistering form on Tuesday were the Williams sisters and the Serbian duo of Jelena Jankovic and Novak Djokovic.

Jankovic, the women's world number one and Olympics top seed in the absence through injury of Ana Ivanovic, beat Ukraine's Alona Bondarenko 7-5, 6-1.

The Serbian broke Bondarenko three times in the second set and put the match away with a lightning backhand pass down the line.

The 23-year-old from Belgrade was wearing a strapping on her troublesome right calf and did not look completely at ease but said she hoped it would continue to get better.

"I took some painkillers to be able to play, otherwise it's quite sore," Jankovic said.

"It was already much better than yesterday when I was in a lot of pain. But today it was better and I hope to be improving further for Wednesday."

Jankovic's compatriot Djokovic, seeded third in the men's draw, progressed confidently against Germany's Rainer Schuettler, 6-4, 6-2.

But Russian fourth seed Nikolay Davydenko crashed out 7-5, 6-3 to Paul-Henri Mathieu.

Mathieu will join French compatriots Gilles Simon, the 10th seed, and Gael Monfils in the third round after their respective wins over Guillermo Canas of Argentina and Romanian Victor Hanescu.

There was also a win for 17th-seeded Czech Tomas Berdych over Italy's Andreas Seppi, and a win for Belgian Olivier Rochus who was a

set ahead of Janko Tipsarevic when the Serbian retired injured.

The Williams sisters both earlier confirmed their status as among the hot favourites for gold in the women's singles, which has been hit by a raft of withdrawals.

Fourth seed Serena took just 44 minutes to dispatch Australia's Samantha Stosur, the American eight-time Grand Slam champion breaking at 3-2 and taking complete control to reel off the last 10 games to love.

"It was clean," said Williams, who missed the 2004 Games in Athens through injury. "My way of improving on it is to keep it up."

The 2000 doubles winner's round-three opponent is French 15th seed Alize Cornet, who subdued a vociferous home crowd in outclassing China's Peng Shuai 6-2, 6-2.

Serena's sister Venus, the seventh seed, demolished Iveta Benesova of the Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-4.

"I definitely feel more confident with every match that passes. That's what winning does," she said.

Russian sixth and ninth seeds Dinara Safina and Vera Zvonareva also stayed in the mix with wins over Spaniard Maria Jose Martinez Sanchez and Israeli Shahar Pe'er, while Slovakian 16th seed Dominika Cibulkova cruised past Bulgaria's Tsvetana Pironkova.

But two other women's seeds were knocked out in morning play.

Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia, the 10th seed, was thrashed by Danish teen Caroline Wozniacki, and Polish eighth seed Agnieszka Radwanska went down to Italian Francesca Schiavone.



Germany's Frank Ostholt rides on his horse "Mr. Medcott" at the cross-country event of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in Hong Kong's Beas river yesterday. Germany claimed the gold in this event.