

## 12-year old happy with swim

INTERNET, undated

The youngest athlete competing in the Beijing Olympics, 12-year-old Antoinette Guedia Mouafo, said after swimming in the women's 50m freestyle that she was very happy with her performance. The event was the wildcard event for women at the Beijing Olympics, giving developing countries without good facilities an opportunity to enter swimmers, even if they do not make the qualifying times.

The Cameroonian swimmer, who will turn 13 on October 21, was handed a huge bouquet of flowers by organizers after finishing her race in 33.59 seconds, which she said proudly was a personal best.

And although she was 9.39 sec behind the fastest time swum by Cate Campbell, she still managed to leave seven swimmers behind her.

The scholar, who trains three to five times a week in a hotel pool in her home town of Douala, said that she was very proud to have competed in the Olympics.

The Olympics are a very important competition and only the best participate. I am very proud that I was one of them."

She said that when she returns to the West African country, she will go back to school. "When I finish school, I would love to study medicine in France."

But she still has a long way to go and until such time, she will continue swimming and dream of competing in London 2012.

## Beckham to be at closing ceremony

INTERNET, London

David Beckham is to appear in the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics on August 24, media reports said Friday. The appearance of the 33-year-old England international on the top of a London bus was supposed to be a closely guarded secret until details were leaked in advance, the BBC reported.

Beckham will stand at the side of

London Mayor Boris Johnson when International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge hands him the flag for the host city of the next summer games in 2012.

During London's eight-minute presentation ceremony, Beckham set to stand on the top of one of London's red double-decker buses and kick a football into the crowd.

The Daily Telegraph newspaper said Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and pop star Leona Lewis will sing a duet during the show, which will also feature hundreds of dancers performing ballet and break-dancing.

Organizers of the show as well as the IOC expressed disappointment at the failure to keep all the details of the performance under wraps.

People connected with it said the London segment will be in stark contrast to the Chinese goodbye and will also "contain quite a lot of humour," according to the BBC.

## 'Fake' ethnic children at opening

INTERNET, Beijing

The children wearing traditional costumes displaying the unity of China's 56 ethnic groups at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games were all members of the Han Chinese majority, an official confirmed Friday. Wang Wei, vice-president of Beijing's organizing committee, BOCOG, confirmed news reports, saying the practice was "completely normal."

"It is a tradition in China that at events costumes of the different ethnic groups are worn to symbolize that they live together peacefully and in happiness," he said.

An official guide to the opening stated that the children came from the 56 ethnic groups.

He accused a journalist as being "overly meticulous," who questioned whether Han Chinese could portray Tibetans or Uighurs, groups where considerable tension with the government existed.

"That is not worth mentioning," Wang said.

The "fake" minority children are the third exposed manipulation of the opening ceremony, which was watched by around 2 billion people worldwide.

Earlier reports unveiled that the little girl performing the "Hymn to the Motherland" was lip-synching to a pre-recorded voice of another girl. The original singer was banned from performing because a high-ranking party functionary regarded her not pretty enough.

Chinese state TV CCTV also reported that images of 29 foot-print fireworks at the opening night had been partly generated by computer graphics and were digitally enhanced.



US swimmer Rebecca Soni (L), winner of the women's 200m breaststroke gold, listens to the national anthem during the medal ceremony while Germany's Britta Steffen pumps her fist after winning the women's 100m freestyle gold in the pool at the National Aquatics Centre in Beijing yesterday.

## Kumar's gift to the nation

AFP, Beijing

Indian boxer Akhil Kumar marked his country's Independence Day in style with a stunning upset Olympic win over world bantamweight champion Sergey Vodopyanov, saying it was a "gift to the nation".

"I knew I would win," said Kumar who got the nod from the judges after holding the Russian to 9-9 over four rounds.

"I had said earlier that I will and I have done it," added Kumar now into the quarter-finals of the Beijing tournament.

"It was really difficult to stage a comeback after going 6-4 down. But I had faith in my God."

"Today is India's Independence Day. I have given a gift to the nation in the shape of victory. I won today because of the prayers of the nation."

Kumar, who admitted he'd been "quite boastful", insisted he'd always believed he would win, despite facing a high-class boxer in Vodopyanov.

"A lot of people asked me why I am so confident even before a fight against a world champion. It's because I have faith in my God. It's all because my God was with me that I have won."

"Otherwise, it was such a close bout. I could have lost also."

PHOTOS: AFP

## Soni comes up trumps

### SWIMMING

USA TODAY

former Auburn swimmer who has won three silver medals at these Olympics, said Soni's swim was inspiring.

"It's just what the Olympics are about," Coventry said. "It's about getting in there and making your own dream come true."

Jones won the 100-meter breaststroke on Tuesday, with Soni taking silver. That was a confidence builder, Soni said.

Now, Jones has been dismissed from her place in the record books.

Soni, a 21-year-old from Plainsboro, N.J., shocked the Australian star and set a world record winning the 200-meter breaststroke Friday morning at the Olympic Games.

"It just kind of flowed. It just kind of happened," Soni said. "I just tried to stay relaxed and not rush through the water."

Soni, the daughter of Hungarian immigrants, became only the second American woman to win gold at these Olympics. Natalie Coughlin won the 100 backstroke.

Soni set an Olympic and American record of 2:22.17 in Wednesday's heats of the 200.

"The Americans are naturally good at that," Jones said then. "They always swim fast in the heats."

In the final, too.

By finishing as top American in the 100 breaststroke, Soni is to swim that leg in the final of the 400 medley relay Sunday morning (Saturday night, ET). So she could leave Beijing with three medals.

Jones had been so dominant in the 200 breaststroke, she has lowered the world record three times and decisively won the 2007 world title that it was surreal to see her falling farther and farther behind over the closing 50 meters.

Soni touched first by 0.1 after 150 meters, and pulled away. She said she had plenty left. Norway's Sara Nordenstam took the bronze in 2:23.02.

"When I was ahead of Leisel, I didn't really know what was going on," Soni said. "I just went with it."

The senior-to-be at the University of Southern California is a four-time NCAA champion, including a three-year sweep of the 200-yard breaststroke.

## Gonzalez endures a marathon

AFP, Beijing

Chile's Fernando Gonzalez survived a marathon encounter with US number one James Blake to reach the Olympic Games final on Friday, guaranteeing himself a second successive medal.

The Athens 2004 bronze medalist and doubles champion came from a set down and saved three match points to win 4-6, 7-5, 11-9 after two hours and 51 minutes.

The 42-game match clocked in as one of the longest in Olympic history, just one shy of Max Mirnyi and Jiri Vanek's record 43-game encounter at Sydney 2000.

Gonzalez, 28, has not lost to Blake since 2003 but the American was riding high after his stunning defeat of top seed Roger Federer in the quarterfinals.

Earlier Federer kept his Olympic medal hopes alive with a doubles win over India's Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes.

The singles top seed teamed up with world number 10 Stanislas Wawrinka for a 6-2, 6-4 quarterfinal victory.

Venus and Serena Williams, who also crashed out of the singles, beat Japan's Ayumi Morita and Ai Sugiyama 7-5, 6-2 in the women's doubles second round.

Both matches started late on Thursday but were called off because of rain.

Heavy rain on Sunday and Thursday has forced scheduling changes with the women's singles and doubles semis now on Saturday and both finals on Sunday, along with the bronze-medal play-offs.

"Serrano shot really good," Wunderle said. "I shot good, he shot better. The Olympic games are about the extraordinary."

Wunderle, the 2000 silver medalist in the event, said his Olympic showing was the highlight of his year.

"All in all, I had a good competition," he said. "It hadn't been my best season, but I saved my best performance for the games."

## Bolt from the blue

### ATHLETICS

AFP, Beijing

Jamaica's world record-holder Usain Bolt threw down the gauntlet to his 100m rivals here on Friday as he recorded the sixth fastest time this year in his Olympic second roundheat.

The 21-year-old ran an effortless 9.82 seconds to win his heat, a faster time than the other two athletes seen as Bolt's main challengers for gold.

Former world record-holder Asafa Powell of Jamaica won his heat in a slower time of 10.02 seconds while America's world champion Tyson Gay only finished second in his heat.

Bolt was happy with his performance and said that he had only made a real effort over the first 50 metres.

"I just ran the first 50 metres and then I looked round to make sure I was safe and I shut it off," said Bolt.

"Yes, I'm ready for my best," he added.

It was a great night for the Caribbean as all five of the heats were won by representatives from the region, backing up Jamaican Michael Johnson's Naoki Tsukahara filled the

third and last automatic qualifying spot.

Martina, 24, may have surprised many with his performance but it didn't surprise him. "It's pretty good but I have been working hard," he said. "I am not surprised at that (the time).

"I know I'm going to win for sure otherwise I'd be sitting at home watching it on TV," a smiling Martina added.

Thompson was joined in the semifinals by compatriot Marc Burns, who just edged 2003 world champion Kim Collins in the slowest winning time of the heats, 10.05secs.

Burns, a two-time world finalist, was satisfied enough with his performance, but left unamused by the false start on the field's first try at getting away.

"I ran a complete race despite a slow start. It was a bit disappointing that there was another deliberate false start. I just have to run comfortably on Saturday," commented the 25-year-old.

The

first of the second round heats produced a surprise as Churandy Martina of the Dutch Antilles won in an impressive personal best of 9.99secs from 2005 world silver medalist Frater, while Japan's Naoki Tsukahara filled the

## Ukraine hit bulls-eye

### SHOOTING

AP, Beijing

individual Olympic medal.

"I deserve the medal because I've trained for 14 years," he said. "I give thanks to the support of my nation, my people and my family."

Ruban had a 103-95 edge after his 11th arrow when Park scored just 8 on his 11th to make it an even score. Ruban scored a 10 on his 12th shot, forcing Park to get a perfect score to stay in the match. Park missed the center section by a few millimeters.

Park, who celebrated his 33rd birthday Friday, said this likely was his last Olympics. Though he felt pressure to please a large South Korean crowd, he appreciated the cheers.

"In the final round, you saw a very exciting game, and it was an honor to be participating," he said. "It gave us the opportunity to show that archery can be a very exciting sport."

## Mongolia celebrates gold

AP, Ulan Bator

Thousands of Mongolians hit the streets of the capital to celebrate the country's first-ever Olympic gold medal, offering vodka toasts, blaring their car horns and waving the nation's flag from the city's tallest buildings.

Fireworks exploded above Ulan Bator as revelers sang the national anthem after traditional wrestler Tuvshinbayar Naidan's judo win on Thursday. Naidan, whose nickname is "Tuvshinbayar," beat Kazakhstan's Askhat Zhitkeyev in the men's 100-kilogram class.

"I can't believe Mongolia just won a gold medal," said Baljinnyam Dashdorj, 17, celebrating with relatives spanning three generations. "I can't believe he did it. This is amazing. I'm so happy. I can only jump up and down!"

Trickett won the 100 butterfly on Monday.

"Britta is a wonderful person and a great competitor," said the Australian, who reached over the lane rope and offered Steffen a congratulatory hug. "Full credit to her. She kept driving through the wall."

When the race was over, Steffen waited a few seconds before turning around to see her result.

"At that moment I didn't know what had happened on the other side," she said. "I only knew where Britta was beside me, and I thought she'd be faster than her. But then I turned around and everything was great."

## Psych consult brings gold

### SWIMMING

AP, Beijing

After the Athens Games, Steffen took a year off and sought help from a psychologist, for reasons she hasn't elaborated on. She came back in August 2005 and won the 50 and 100 free at the German championships, then dominated the 2006 European Championships with four golds, one silver and three world records.

"I enjoy my life. I have a positive environment in Berlin and I train in one of the best pools we have," said Steffen, who still works with a sports psychologist.

Her mark of 53.30 seconds in the 100 stood for nearly two years until Libby Trickett improved it to 52.88 in March.

Despite the record, Trickett only barely qualified for the final when Pang Jiaying of China was disqualified, setting up the Australian to swim in lane 8 alongside Steffen.

"I'm glad she was there," Steffen said. "In an Olympic final you want to compete against the best. It would have been difficult without her."

Trickett took silver in 53.16 and Natalie Coughlin of the United States settled for bronze in 53.39.

"It was good that I had her next to me," Steffen said of Trickett. "She's so different from me. She starts faster and I swim more evenly. At the end of the day, she's the world record holder and she's only second, but that's what sport is all about."

Trickett won the 100 butterfly on Monday.

"Britta is a wonderful person and a great competitor," said the Australian, who reached over the lane rope and offered Steffen a congratulatory hug. "Full credit to her. She kept driving through the wall."

When the race was over, Steffen waited a few seconds before turning around to see her result.

"At that moment I didn't know what had happened on the other side," she said. "I only knew where Libby was beside me, and I thought she'd be faster than her. But then I turned around and everything was great."

