



US athlete Angelo Taylor crosses the final hurdle ahead of the chasing pack during the men's 400m hurdles final of the 2008 Beijing Olympics at the National Stadium on Monday.

Coach 'sold' his secrets

INTERNET, undated

Australians on Monday rose to the defence of Jessica Schipper's coach for selling his training secrets to the trainer of the Chinese swimmers who beat her to take the gold and silver in the 200-metre butterfly final. Schipper, the reigning world champion and the red hot favourite for the event, took bronze behind Liu Zige and Jiao Liuyang.

Coach Ken Wood, 78, who said he sold Schipper's training programme and dietary details for "big money" because he wanted the cash, said local coaches were underpaid and so peddled their expertise abroad.

While the tabloid newspapers pilloried Wood for being venal and unpatriotic, Australian Olympic boss John Coates defended him.

"It would be very hard for us to impose restrictions on their ability to earn a living when we don't pay them," Coates said. "Any criticism of Ken is unwarranted because Ken has to earn a living."

Sports commentators also slammed the tabloids for targeting Wood. They noted that lots of Australian athletes took up sports sponsorships at US universities and brought their training secrets back home for the benefit of other Australians.

Taylor leads US sweep

ATHLETICS

AFP, Beijing

Veteran hurdler Angelo Taylor and discus thrower Stephanie Brown-Trafton opened America's track and field gold account on Monday but their gymnasts were undone by a controversial new scoring system.

The 29-year-old Taylor regained the 400 metres hurdles title he won in 2000 to beat home compatriots, world champion Kerron Clement and 2005 world champion Bershawn Jackson.

Lolo Jones, meanwhile, ran the fastest 100m hurdles time in the world this year, winning her semifinal in 12.43 seconds, to set up another US-Jamaican athletics showdown in Tuesday's final.

One night after Jamaican women swept the 100m medals with three Americans behind them, Jones, Damu Cherry and Dawn Harper all went through.

"We're going to go for an American sweep, 1-2-3, and see what happens," said Cherry.

Brown-Trafton was also a winner in the discus with a throw of 64.74m with Cuba's Yarelis Barrios and Olena Antonova of Ukraine taking silver and bronze.

But there will be no gold for 110m hurdler Terrence Trammell whose bid to turn two successive Olympic silvers into gold ended in tears in his first round heat.

The 29-year-old failed to get past the second hurdle because of a left hamstring injury while defend-

Medal therapy

AP, Beijing

Cuban cyclist Yoanka Gonzalez has some medal therapy for her ailing husband.

Gonzalez earned a silver medal Monday in the points race in the Olympic cycling tournament and dedicated it to her husband, who remained at home recovering from a serious car accident.

"This one is for Pedro. I battled for him as hard as I could," Gonzalez said of her husband Pedro Perez, who would have also been in Beijing with the Cuban cycling team, but at one point was in a coma after accident.

Gonzalez, 32, said that her husband is finally recovering but still was unable to make it to the games.

"I think he is going to recover sooner now, because he wanted this medal so badly," she said.

ing champion Liu Xiang of China also limped away with a foot injury.

China won three of the four gold gymnastic medals on offer, but the US were denied a place on top of the podium under a complicated tiebreak system never before used at the Olympics.

The new scoring system, under which the old "perfect 10" has been replaced with two marks, features one mark out of 10 for execution and another reflecting the difficulty of the routine.

In the uneven bars final, China's He Kexin and America's Nastia Liukin both scored 9.025 for execution and 7.7 for difficulty, to give each a final score of 16.725.

But instead of sharing gold, officials implemented a countback system where the highest and lowest of the five judges marks for execution were progressively removed until a winner emerged.

"I don't know if anybody understands what the hell is going on," Liukin's father and coach Valeri said.

The United States won the team gold medal in the Olympic show jumping competition in Hong Kong after a dramatic jump off with Canada, the first time the medal has been decided by showdown.

The American victory came after both teams finished the competition even on 20 penalty points.

Smiles mean more than medals

AP, Beijing

For proud mom Debbie Phelps, the best moments at these Olympics weren't about the eight gold medals.

"The very special thing to me was watching his emotions," she told Associated Press Television News. "The smile on his face and the glint in his eye was just something that, to me, was a self-satisfaction for everything... He was showing a sense of accomplishment."

Michael Phelps was 9 when his parents divorced. Debbie raised him and kept him active with swim lessons. He was 11 when coach Bob Bowman first talked about the Olympics.

Debbie said she always heard about her son's potential, but never let it change anything. She never carried his bags or gave Bowman her opinion on things like which events he should be racing. She believed a parent's role was to be there for support, and that's her advice for other parents.

"Be there to guide, be there to comfort and be there to give a squeeze and a gentle hug and a kiss," she said. "That's been the delineation of (my) jobs in raising Michael Phelps to be the champion that he is."

China cries with Liu

ATHLETICS

AFP, Beijing

China suffered a huge setback Monday to its hopes of winning gold on the track when superstar Liu Xiang sensationally pulled out of the 110m hurdles, taking the gloss off the hosts' best Olympics ever.

The country's 1.3 billion people had been banking on Liu to shine, but he has been troubled by a foot tendon injury and was clearly in pain when he lined up for his race and pulled up before the first hurdle in a false start.

The dejected star, one of the faces of the Beijing Olympics along with basketball Yao Ming, limped down the tunnel of the Bird's Nest stadium to a stunned silence from the 91,000 watching fans.

Liu, the defending champion, has been absent from international competition for most of the year and his coach Sun Haiping said the hurdler has been suffering from the Achilles' heel injury for six to seven years.

"It just got worse," Sun said at a hastily arranged press conference in which he broke down in tears.

"His right heel injury has been a problem since six years ago, even before the Athens Olympics."

"On August 16, we arrived at the Olympic village, medical experts

Liu exit propels ticket dumps

AFP, Beijing

Scalpers scrambled to offload tickets for the Olympic 110m hurdles final as soon as Chinese superstar Liu Xiang pulled out of the event on Monday.

Tickets for Thursday's final had been in sizzling demand on the black market as Liu was China's great hope for athletics gold at the Beijing Games, but he limped out in the heats with a foot injury.

"As soon as I heard the news, I got down to the stadium and I dumped all my tickets at face value," said one American tout outside the main Olympic district, who said he had tens of tickets for the big night.

"That is just the way it goes sometimes," said the tout, who did not want to be named.

He said he had been selling the tickets, normally priced at between 400 and 800 yuan (58 to 116 dollars), for at least 1,500 yuan the day before Liu's exit.

Chinese touts were still selling tickets for all of the days where Liu had been expected to feature, including the final, but prices had dropped after his exit.

A ticket for Thursday was being offered for 3,500 yuan, more than four times its face value, although one Chinese tout told AFP it would have cost 6,000 before Liu's early exit.

Another ticket was on sale with an American online broker for 455 dollars. When contacted, the broker who had travelled to Beijing for the Games said he would wait to drop the price.

"It is just simple supply and demand," he told AFP.

After becoming the first Chinese male athlete to win an athletics gold at the Athens Olympics in 2004, Liu has towered alongside basketball hero Yao Ming as one of China's two most loved sporting stars.

analyzed Liu's injury and specified there was a problem on Liu's Achilles' tendon."

The Chinese team's head coach Feng Shuyong added: "I think the Chinese people will understand the situation and will encourage him to come back to the track and perform well."

Seldom could there have been more pressure and expectation placed on an athlete than there has been on Liu since he confirmed his class in winning the title in Athens four years ago.

The 25-year-old looked a certainty to defend his title successfully until Cuban Dayron Robles threw down the gauntlet this season.

While Liu has not been seen on the European circuit, 21-year-old Robles has torn it up with some devastating performances.

He capped it by breaking Liu's world record in a stunning hurdling display in the Czech Republic, timing 12.87 seconds in June. He clocked 13.39 seconds in his heat Monday to be hot favourite for gold.

The sudden withdrawal of Liu, whose face can be seen on billboards and in TV ads pushing everything from local milk to big Western brands, shocked fans, who count him as a symbol of China's burgeoning success in the world.

"I can't believe this has happened. He is my hero," said Sun Yejun, 30, a Volkswagen quality control engineer in Beijing as he wiped her eyes with a handkerchief.

"I came here especially to see him. I am devastated. I just bought one ticket. The Olympics is over for

me as well as Liu Xiang."

It took the shine off China revealing in its best Olympic gold medal achievement.

The host country has bettered the 32 gold it won in Athens and is on its way to becoming only the third country since World War II after the United States and the Soviet Union -- to top the end-of-Games medal table.

So far it has 39 gold to the United States' 20, but track and field is traditionally an American domain and the balance of power is expected to shift.

Cui Dalin, deputy chef de mission of the Chinese delegation, admits the medals will likely start drying up.

"With events like track and field, China's pace in winning gold medals will slow down," he said.

The country's gymnasts continued their dominance.

The have already had their best Olympics since Los Angeles in 1984 where they won four gold, having now won eight.

He Kexin won the women's uneven bars Monday, with Nastia Liukin of the United States taking silver even though she scored the same mark as her rival.

In the men's rings competition, Chen Yibing won gold with compatriot Yang Wei making it a one-two finish for the home nation.

He Wenna capped the day by taking the women's trampolining title.

Elsewhere, China's men's table tennis team -- Ma Lin, Wang Hao and Wang Liqin -- beat European powerhouse Germany in the team final.



TEARS OF A HURDLER: China's athletics medal hope, Liu Xiang grimaces in pain as he retires from the first round of the men's 110 metres hurdles at the Bird's Nest in Beijing on Monday.

Review

Phelps and the eighth wonder of the world

SWIMMING

INTERNET, Beijing

The Beijing Olympic swimming competition drew to a close on Sunday in the Beijing Water Cube the same way it began - with Michael Phelps winning gold. The 23-year-old began his quest for an



LUI ZING

unprecedented eight gold medals a week ago by taking the first one on offer - the 400m individual medley - in a world record time of 4:03.84.

On Sunday he ended it with victory in the last swim of the competition - the 4x100m medley relay.

And again it was a world record.

In between, he picked up gold for the 4x100m freestyle relay, 200m freestyle, 200m butterfly, 4x200m freestyle relay, 200m individual medley and the 100m butterfly, broke four other world records and became both the most successful all-time Olympian and the most successful Olympian at an individual Games.

His eight gold medals in Beijing took him past the seven won by American swimmer Mark Spitz in Munich in 1972, while his 14 overall is five clear of Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina, Finnish athlete Paavo Nurmi, Spitz and US athlete Carl Lewis.

After his final race, he described his quest for the eight gold medals as an "upwards rollercoaster ride."

"The whole thing, every race, one after the other from winning by one hundredth of a second yesterday, to finishing it off with a world record."

"It's an amazing experience and something I'll have forever."

Not surprisingly, Phelps' achievements overshadowed everything else that happened in the Beijing Water Cube, where a total of 25 world records were broken.

There were several other stand-out performances, like

Zimbabwean Kirsty Coventry, who gave her troubled homeland something to cheer about with three silver medals and a gold, as well as two world records.

"I am so proud and honoured to be representing Zimbabwe here. Everyone back home was so excited and so supportive of me coming into my race," she said.

South Korean Park Tae Hwan gave his country a first-ever



EAMON SULLIVAN

Olympic swimming medal when he won the 400m freestyle and added a silver in the 200m.

Also getting a first-ever swimming medal for his country was Tunisian Oussama Mellouli, who denied Australian Grant Hackett a

third straight gold medal in the men's 1,500m.

Mellouli, has only just returned to the sport after serving a lengthy doping ban, said that he was pleased to have come back. "The last year was very difficult and I am pleased that things worked out."

American Natalie Coughlin won six medals (one gold, two silver and three bronze) from her six swims, while Australian Stephanie Rice picked up three gold medals (women's 200m and 400m individual medley, as well as 4x200m freestyle).

Britain's Rebecca Adlington (women's 400m and 800 freestyle), German Britta Steffen (women's 50m and 100m freestyle) and Japan's Kosuke Kitajima (men's 100m and 200m breaststroke) were other double-gold medal winners.

Kitajima added a bronze in the

4x100m medley. In Athens four years ago he also managed to win a double in the breaststroke and added a relay medal.

41-year-old mother-of-one Dara Torres became the oldest Olympic swimming medalist when she won silver in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay.

The American added another two silvers (50m freestyle and 4x100m medley relay) to take her personal tally of Olympic medals to 12 and equal Jenny Thompson's women's swimming record.

She was just one hundredth of a second from the gold in the 50m freestyle. "It was tough to lose the race by one hundredth of a second. I realized I should not have filed my nails last night," she said.

But if Phelps was the star attraction,

the relay events were a particularly strong supporting act as six world records were broken in the six events.

The Australian women's 4x200m freestyle relay slashed an astonishing 5.78 from the old record of 7:50.09 and followed that up by taking 3.05 seconds off the women's 4x100m medley relay to set the new mark at 3:52.69.

Rice said that leading the 4x200m freestyle relay team had been a new experience for her. "I have never led off a relay before, so that was a new experience. I really enjoyed that and enjoyed being able to cheer the rest of the team on after finishing."

In the men's relays the US team first cut the 4x100m freestyle relay record from

3:12.23 to 3:08.24 and the became the first team to swim under seven minutes for the 4x200m freestyle relay as the won gold in 6:58.56.

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